Rugby Union Five Nations Championship: Scotland 20 England 34

England switch on the power

Robert Armstrong at Murrayfield

ENGLAND moved a step closer to the Five Nations consolation prize of a triple crown with a highly erratic performance that nevertheless produced four excellent tries and several exciting individual cameos in their Calcutta Cup clash at Murrayfield last Sunday.

Their fly-half Paul Grayson established a new scoring record for an Englishman playing in Edinburgh: his 19 points came from a brilliant solo try, four conversions, a drop goal and a penalty.

It took England a good hour to send the under-powered Scots into full retreat but the firepower their backs eventually unleashed was worth waiting for. Three splendidly worked tries in a sparkling 13-minute period by man of the match Matt Dawson, Austin Healey and Grayson left Scotland's previously dogged defence in disarray.

Scotland did manage to save their blushes with a couple of counter-attacking tries by their wings near the end. However, Gary Armstrong's players are bound to reflect on a disappointing series of near-misses in the first half, when their enterprising backs might well have breached the England line on a couple of occasions. The interval score was 6-6.

Scotland were left to regret their failure to turn early pressure into points largely because of a persistent lack of precision inside the England 22. When the Scots were awarded a penalty in front of the posts Craig Chalmers steered his kick from the edge of the box wide of the left upright. Then, awarded a scrum in a good attacking position, Scotland ought to have scored but tackles by Dawson on Armstrong and Matt Perry on Derrick Lee denied the Scots within a few metres of the line.

Meanwhile Grayson had opened England's account with a confident 35-metre penalty goal after Rob Wainwright was penalised for failing to release. A late tackle by Martin Johnson yielded a penalty that Chalmers guided home carefully from 30 metres. However, England then capitalised on a lapse of concentration in the Scottish defence, setting up a ruck in front of the posts from which Grayson dropped a crisp goal.

In the 10 minutes before half-time Scotland again put England under heavy pressure with dangerous breaks by Armstrong, who was well supported by his centres Alan Tait and Gregor Townsend. Once again Scotland were frustrated by England's cover defence with Healey and Will Greenwood putting in important tackles inside their 22.

After the break England laid siege to the Scottish line with a series of scrums that were only just held. In the 49th minute, though, England turned the screw tighter with an attacking scrum in the left corner that the Scottish pack deliberately collapsed. The referee Clayton Thomas promptly awarded a penalty try.

Just before the hour Scotland carved out a splendid opportunity to reduce the 13-6 deficit when England were driven deep into their 22 but the ebullient flanker Adam Roxburgh knocked on and the chance was lost.

England responded with the most clinical score of the afternoon from a slick move that involved Dean Ryan, Grayson and Greenwood. The honours went to Dawson, who provided a vital linking pass and a second later was on hand to thunder over between the posts.

With 13 minutes left England made victory certain with a try that originated from an uncharacteristic error by Tait. The alert Jeremy Guscott hacked the ball on towards the right corner and Healey completed a clever soccer-style dribble with a pick-up that carried him between two defenders for a try.

Six minutes from the end Grayson produced England's *pièce de resistance*, a superb solo break that carried him past four defenders for a touchdown to the right of the posts.

England relaxed a little and Scotland were allowed to give the scoreline a respectable gloss with two tries in the closing stages from Tony Stanger and Shaun Longstaff. Roxburgh carved out both opportunities with his aggressive ability to shake off midfield tackles.

Helping hand: Greenwood congratulates Healey PHOTO: DAVID CANNON

Table

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
France	3	3	0	0	93	49	6
England	3	2	0	1	111	70	4
Wales	3	2	0	1	75	94	4
Scotland	4	1	0	3	66	120	2
Ireland	3	0	0	3	63	66	0

Cryptic crossword by Araucaria

Across

7 Expert on glass is bottled (7)
8 Beautiful Bobby's justifiable arrest (4,3)
10 One of a shower with remote control (6)
11 Love would harass the devil (3,5)
12 Delighted with young American detective (4)
13 Used? I'll be round in a minute (6,4)
14 Former partner to delay ad-lib (11)
19 The snag with some garlic is the knot (5,5)
22 Was romancing in song (4)
23 A young female, that's me: I might be too young for it (3,5)
24 The doctor's not happy it's a secret service (6)
25 Representation is about right for height (7)
26 Extinguish overeating? (4-3)

Down

1 Neat servant (7)
2 Book-end, maybe, in Yorkshire: 10 in France (8)
3 Painter a point short of entry (6)
4 One who indulged little fishes when about finished (8)
5 Flowers from the war? (6)
6 To be a practical joker at the highest level? (3,4)
9 Sort of grass-root vegetable, partial to remote control (5,6)
15 Letter by male compiler to painter — they won't last (8)
16 Seeds are naturally one's very personal property (4-4)
17 Pestilential old country? (7)
18 Girl like you and me with hoofs off the ground (7)
20 Dance performed when a television's turned up (6)
21 Unglamorous compiler among the saints? (6)

Last week's solution

LATECUT SCRATCH
ROMAN CONSCRIPT
ALTERATION APSE
VOLUNTEERED
OHRONOMETER
ROLE BUSHRANGER
INTUITION DITTO
SYSTOLE SANDALS

Ireland 21 Wales 30

Jenkins points way to victory

Ian Malin at Lansdowne Road

NEIL JENKINS passed one milestone when he became Wales's leading scorer three seasons ago. Another record was left behind last Saturday here when the fly-half went one better than JPR Williams's 55 caps, and his personal tally of 20 points means that Paul Thorburn's points haul for Wales of 304 may be doubled by the time the side have played France at Wembley on April 5.

Jenkins's 594 points are phenomenal, yet he will never be spoken of in awe-inspired tones like JPR. He stepped forward in that familiar hunched modest way of his to collect the man-of-the-match award in Dublin, his last-minute try having capped Wales's unexpected victory.

At the interval it was difficult not to see Ireland registering a fifth successive win over their opponents. Inspired by a rousing chorus or two of their new anthem, Ireland's Call, and with their No 8 Victor Costello in rampaging form, Ireland looked as if they might submerge Wales beneath a green tide.

The New Zealander Andy Ward scored his first try for Ireland. Paddy Johns took a line-out, the pack drove and Conor McGuinness gave Ward a clever reverse pass for the flanker to dive over on an unguarded blind side.

Jenkins scored the first of his six successful kicks, but after the Wales full-back Kevin Morgan had been body-checked by Ward and given treatment the Welsh had barely regrouped when Costello picked up from a scrum to crash over for a second try.

A 12-3 lead looked unassailable but Ireland supporters have been down this road before. Almost from the restart Ciaran Clarke, the Irish full-back, made one of his many errors when he misjudged Jenkins's garryowen in his 22. The ball brushed off Clarke and rebounded to Allan Bateman, who ran in beneath the posts.

Five minutes after the break the game turned with a Welsh try of beautiful simplicity. They won the ball from a line-out, an area in which they had creaked during the first half. Robert Howley, Jenkins, Leigh Davies, Bateman and Appleyard then combined in a fluent move to give Morgan the chance to hare in at the corner.

From then on Jenkins and Eric Elwood exchanged penalties before Jenkins's sealed victory with a try after the replacement Stuart Davies had charged from the base of a scrum and broken Miller's weak tackle to send the fly-half over.

The Guardian Weekly

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The Washington Post · Le Monde

Clinton vows to back African dream

David Beresford in Cape Town

PRESIDENT Bill Clinton last week committed the United States to a partnership with South Africa in pursuit of the dream of an African renaissance.

He told a joint sitting of parliament in Cape Town that the US needed, and was determined to build, a strong South Africa.

The first US head of state to visit Africa, Mr Clinton was given an ecstatic reception by parliamentarians as he entered what he called "this hall of freedom" hand-in-hand with Nelson Mandela.

Hillary Clinton, sitting in the public gallery with President Mandela's unofficial "first lady", Graca Machel, watched as her husband told parliament: "In overcoming your past you offer a powerful example to people who are torn by their own divisions in all parts of this earth."

He added: "The courage and imagination that created the United States and the principles that are enshrined in our constitution inspired men and women without a voice across the world to believe that one day they, too, could have a government of the people by the people and for the people.

"Now the courage and imagination that created the new South Africa and the principles that guide your constitution inspire all of us to be animated by the belief that one day humanity all the world over can at last be released from the bonds of hatred and bigotry."

The US provided aid and assistance to South Africa in the first four years of its "liberation", Mr Clinton said. "Now, as the new South Africa emerges, we seek a genuine partnership based on mutual respect and mutual reward."

The US and South Africa needed to "build together to meet the persistent problems and fulfil the remarkable promise of the African continent", he said. Africa remained the world's greatest development challenge, plagued as it was by poverty, malnutrition, disease, illiteracy and unemployment. Terrible conflicts continued to tear the continent.

"But . . . democracy is gaining strength, business is growing, peace is making progress. We are seeing what Deputy President [Thabo] Mbeki has called an African renaissance."

Earlier Mr Clinton unexpectedly joined his wife on a visit to a model housing scheme on the impoverished Cape Flats, which flank Cape Town.

The Clintons went to see the partially US-funded project where women are building their own homes to escape a life in squatter camps.

Mr Clinton said their self-help project was a shining example. "What you are doing here . . . should be a model for people who do not have very much all over Africa and all over the world," he said. "All over the world people will see what you are doing in this neighbourhood and will say, 'I want to do that'."

Mrs Clinton visited the housing project last year with her daughter, Chelsea.

Nelson Mandela last week showed President Clinton the tiny prison cell on Robben Island in which he was held for 18 years. Mr Clinton said: 'My first thought was to thank God this person who occupied the cell was able to live all those years in that way without having his heart turned to stone and without giving up on his dream for South Africa' PHOTOGRAPH RICK WILKING

'Plot' exposed, page 4
Washington Post, page 13

Middle East talks end in stalemate

Doug Struck in Jerusalem

DIPLOMATIC pressure on Israel over the deadlocked peace process mounted this week as the United States envoy, Dennis Ross, ended frustrating talks with Israeli and Palestinian officials.

Mr Ross, dispatched by President Clinton to try to revive talks stalled for more than a year, returned to Washington on Tuesday to report on his four days of shuttle diplomacy. He gave no word on his progress before he flew back to the US, but there were warnings about the deadlock that has brought the peace process to a virtual standstill.

During a visit to Moscow, the United Nations secretary-general, Kofi Annan, said that the Middle East peace talks were "in distress". In Washington, the US state department spokesman James Rubin said the peace process was "in dire straits".

In Egypt, where he briefed President Hosni Mubarak at the resort of Sharm el Sheikh, Mr Ross said, "The stalemate begins to diminish hopes." He repeated previous hints that the US might withdraw from mediation: "At some point, we have to bring this effort to a conclusion."

The warnings were aimed chiefly at Israel, which has balked at terms of an unpublished US plan for an Israeli handover of more of the West Bank to Palestinians, a handover set by two previous peace agreements.

Meanwhile the Israeli government was reported to be establishing new Jewish settlements on the West Bank even as Mr Ross began talks to promote Washington's latest peace initiative. — *The Washington Post*

Comment, page 12

BMW to invest $1.5 billion in Rolls-Royce

Nicholas Bannister

BMW IS expected to invest more than $1.5 billion in Rolls-Royce Motor Cars, the luxury car-maker it has agreed to buy from Vickers for $550 million.

BMW, Germany's second largest car company, has already invested $3.2 billion in the Rover Group, which it bought from British Aerospace in 1994.

Some of the new Rolls-Royce investment may be used to develop a sportier model to fill the gap between BMW's top-of-the-range cars and the more luxurious Bentley and Rolls-Royce cars.

The German group promised to double the workforce at Rolls's Crewe works and triple output to about 6,000 cars a year, but it is likely to mean the introduction of modern production techniques. Rolls-Royce and Bentley cars have always been hand-built.

BMW fought off bids by German rival Volkswagen and groups of Rolls-Royce enthusiasts.

The prospect of Rolls-Royce being sold to a foreign company failed to ignite the patriotic protest that accompanied the muted sale of Land-Rover to General Motors in the 1980s.

Rolls-Royce, whose fortunes have fluctuated during the past 20 years, is on the upturn. It is back into profit and has just launched its first new Rolls-Royce model for 18 years, the Silver Seraph, with the new Bentley due later this month. Both the new models are powered by BMW engines.

Vickers shareholders will have to approve the Rolls-Royce sale at an extraordinary general meeting, which will probably take place in May.

David Gow adds: **For a widow living in Bad Homburg, a spa town near Frankfurt, the acquisition by the maker of the Ultimate Driving Machine of perhaps the world's ultimate brand marks the apogee of a long and lucrative love affair with BMW.**

Joanna Quandt, aged 70, known as the "nun in the golden convent" for the frugal, reclusive nature of her life, is worth at least $1.6 billion — the third-richest woman in Europe, after the queens of Britain and Holland.

With her daughter Susanne and son Stefan, she owns up to two-thirds of Bavarian Motor Works, the now unstoppable firm her late husband Herbert helped rescue from bankruptcy almost 40 years ago.

It was not the first crisis in BMW's history. It was founded to the north of Munich in 1916 out of two failed aviation businesses. After the 1919 Treaty of Versailles banned Germany from making aircraft, it turned to motorcycles. BMW's first car hit the roads only in 1932.

After building tens of thousands of aero engines for Hitler's war machine and seeing its plants turned to rubble, BMW did not resume car-making until 1952. Seven years later, unable to sell its limousines or motorbikes, BMW ran out of money.

In 1959, shareholders turned down plans to sell to Mercedes's owner, Daimler-Benz, and Mr Quandt, a main stockholder, stepped in and took an even bigger slice of equity.

But it was an outsider, Eberhard von Kuenheim, who between 1970 and 1993 built BMW into the ultimate financial machine and one of Germany's top 15 industrial firms.

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF80	Netherlands	G 5
Denmark	DK17	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 14	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 600	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,500	Switzerland	SF 3.80



Paperbacks

Desmond Christy

The Ordinary Seaman, by Francisco Goldman (Faber, £7.99)

A *SHIP* of fools? So the Urus, a wreck moored on a desolate Brooklyn pier and manned by sailors who are barely fed, might seem to a New Yorker. But Esteban, the "ordinary" seaman who at 19 is a veteran of the war in Nicaragua, and his crew mates all have their dreams of where this wreck and their lives might sail to. Can a Sandinista in *los Estados Unidos* — bloody paymasters of the Contras — lead his battalion of exploited seafarers to the riches of the New World? Joseph Conrad and William Golding had to send their metaphors out to sea for us to understand other worlds; Goldman can do it without lifting anchor. A wonderful novel, based, alas, on real events.

The Analects of Confucius, translation and notes by Simon Leys (Norton, £9.95)

C*ONFUCIUS* rules, OK? We are often told — although lately with less conviction — that the Tiger economies of East Asia have succeeded because of their devotion to Confucian ideas. The Confucius most of us know, indeed, is the Confucius who is always telling us that we must honour our parents, elders and superiors. It is Simon Leys's intention to help us realise the extent to which Confucius has been manipulated over the past 2,500 years into "State Confucianism", an account of the Analects that exaggerates the subject's duties to the ruler and underplays the ruler's duties to the subject. Analect 14.22 reads: "Zilu asked how to serve a prince. The Master said: 'Tell him the truth even if it offends him.'" The best Confucians, I fear, are all in Chinese prisons.

The Babel Guide to Jewish Fiction, by Ray Keenoy and Saskia Brown (Boulevard/Babel, £9.95)

T*HIS* addition to an excellent series has been published to coincide with the 50th anniversary of Israel. The subject matter is far too large for a little book like this, but who among us has read even 50 per cent of what is reviewed here? It comes with an enjoyable glossary of Hebrew and Yiddish terms used in the book. Perhaps in future we can have separate guides to Israeli fiction, Yiddish fiction, American-Jewish fiction and so on. Incidentally, if you could only write about 70 or so Jewish writers of fiction, would you put George Steiner in your list, as this Babel guide does? But what, as George might say, does a Luftmensch ("a man with no clear means of support who uses his wits to get by") know about these things?

Rhyme and punishment

Peter Conrad

A Gift Imprisoned
The Poetic Life of Matthew Arnold
by Ian Hamilton
Bloomsbury 242pp £17.99

I*AN HAMILTON'S* biography of Matthew Arnold is a small, sombre tragedy, an account of artistic suicide. In his early 30s, Arnold renounced poetry. Having been a feckless, dandified follower of Byron, he abruptly suppressed the truant imagination. He banned his own poem "Empedocles on Etna" because it lacked moral certainty, and spent the second half of his life as an inspector of schools.

Hamilton broods over Arnold's betrayal of his youthful ambition, which he sees as a chastening confrontation with personal limits. This is the bitter wisdom of middle age, required to acknowledge that time is short and failure likely. But Arnold was also a casualty of the 19th century's middle age, adrift — as he put it — between two worlds, one dead, the other as yet unborn. Romanticism promised the transfiguration of reality, to be achieved by the poet who brandished (in Shelley's alarming phrase) a sword of lightning. The Victorians, having outlived the self-destructive zeal of revolution, saw that social reality remained intractable. Arnold reviled the "iron times" and bleakly re-



Matthew Arnold: sad but not ignoble compromise

viewed "the modern situation in its true blankness and barrenness and unpoetrylessness".

Novels reported on the diminution of poetic hopes. The protagonists of George Eliot are denied the glorious lives they dream of, while those of Charlotte Brontë awaken to a prospect "as unromantic as Monday morning". This new utilitarian regime struck Arnold as the advance of a mortifying ice age. "I am past 30 and three parts iced over," he wrote in 1853. "My pen is even stiffer and more cramped than my feeling."

The romantic poets deified their own art, which had the perverse effect of making it almost impossible to practise. Carlyle called the poet "the highest form of the Godlike in Man's Being". But Wordsworth and Coleridge were not consoled by the notion of poetry as a home-grown religious revelation. What did you do if you weren't feeling particularly godlike? The vocational challenge became even more exhausting in Arnold's generation: before writing poems, you now had to assert (or perhaps stimulate) your faith in poetry, even though devout credulity was being challenged by the biology of Darwin.

Preoccupied by such oracular ambitions, practitioners forgot that their proper business was to choose the right words and place them in the right order, as Arnold himself triumphantly does in one line of a sonnet about the French tragedienne, Rachel, when he lists the racial and cultural influences that mingled in her — "Germany, France, Christ, Moses, Athens, Rome". Six prosaic nouns come to sudden, startling life as poetry, thanks to the trickery of metrics. Yet his technical magic was disparaged by a Victorian sage like Macaulay, who claimed in an essay on Milton that metre and rhyme were primitive mnemonic aids, relics of mankind's preliterate infancy. Since we had now learned how to write, Macaulay thought that we should busy ourselves in writing rational prose.

In factitious epics like "Balder Dead" or fustian tragedies like "Merope", Arnold took to faking conscientiously the strenuousness and sobriety that he thought the art demanded. Meanwhile his diary filled up with jottings about railway schedules and petty cash, the necessary trivia of his bureaucratic errands. Poetry may have been a calling, but it was not a living. Arnold had to find a way to support his wife and their brood, hence the sad but not ignoble compromise that is Hamilton's subject.

Hamilton judges Arnold sternly, yet his book has a painfully sympathetic subtext. It is, in its taciturn way, an autobiography. Hamilton too began as a poet, and though he may not have imprisoned his gift, he confined it, during his own middle age, to the bottom drawer. The first of Hamilton's subjects, Robert Lowell, maintained messianic romantic faith in poetry, though at the cost of insanity. Since then Hamilton has written tartly but perceptively about others who came to humiliating terms with financial reality — Faulkner, Chandler, Hammett and Brecht, selling their glossy lies in the marketplace. This study of Arnold is one more aggrieved report on the fate of literature in a society that can see no profit in it, and therefore condemns it to starve.

Whodunnit? Not Dorothy

Lucretia Stewart

Thrones, Dominations
by Dorothy L Sayers
& Jill Paton Walsh
Hodder & Stoughton 312pp £14.99

T*HE* manuscript of Thrones, Dominations — abandoned by Dorothy L Sayers in 1936 and rediscovered 60 years later in a safe at Sayers's literary agency — consisted of just five chapters. In this fragment, no one had died in suspicious circumstances; the death of George V from natural causes could hardly be said to pose a puzzle for Lord Peter Wimsey.

It is not clear, then, from reading these first five chapters, whether the murder victim selected by the novel's second and final author, Jill Paton Walsh, would have been the one chosen by Sayers herself. But all the main characters are in place and the victim is the obvious one — a young and beautiful woman.

The book opens with the newly married Wimsey and his bride Harriet Vane having dinner in Paris at the tail-end of a long honeymoon. Coincidentally, Wimsey's uncle is dining at the same hotel, as are Mr and Mrs Laurence Harwell, to whom the Wimseys are introduced.

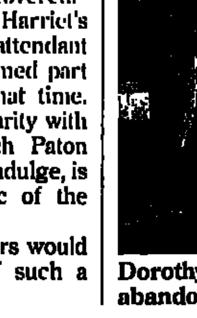
Back in London, the Wimseys meet the Harwells again. Mrs Harwell, a great beauty and a former mannequin, has an admirer, a young playwright called Claude Amery. A portrait painter named Gaston Chapparelle is commissioned to paint both Mrs Harwell and Lady Peter. George V is dying, then dies. Sayers's final chapter describes the funeral and drinks after it chez the Wimseys, at which the Harwells and Chapparelle are present.

While Thrones, Dominations is a perfectly agreeable read, it is difficult to see the point of the book (or indeed of the exercise — it is the nature of the beast that an inferior writer always completes/writes a sequel to a better writer's work).

In her defence, I should say that Paton Walsh has got the voice exactly right. So seamless is the join that I had to check back to verify how many of the book's 21 chapters were Sayers's work and how many Paton Walsh's. However, as one reads on, the themes and consequent sub-plots that develop seem increasingly unlikely to be ones that Sayers herself would have covered.

It's hard to believe that Harriet's possible pregnancy and attendant symptoms would have formed part of any novel written at that time. Equally, the gossipy familiarity with the royal family in which Paton Walsh has her characters indulge, is surely more characteristic of the 1990s than the 1930s.

I rather doubt that Sayers would ever have been guilty of such a lapse of taste.



Dorothy Sayers: Why did she abandon her last Wimsey novel?

A legend in his own coffee break

Andy Beckett

Bilton
by Andrew Martin
Faber 249pp £9.99

S*ATIRE* is a slippery business. For the first few paragraphs here, Andrew Martin has it down. In a London of the near future, his narrator, Adrian Day, gets a job at a newspaper called the New Globe. With quick little sentences, the novel establishes its heightened but recognisable world. There are lifts that glide. A glass hive of journalists. Editors with lunching faces. And a paper so bloated with niche supplements "that it was the boast of the Chief Editor in Chief that he never read a word of it".

The story that follows seems prescient. At the next desk from Day, pasty and bent-shouldered, sits Martyn Bilton. He too is a slave to the lifestyle sections, writing micro-features about "the new move to small cucumbers", yet he has another, more unusual function: Bilton is the paper's token communist.

Day's lunchtimes become pub tutorials. And one afternoon, after Bilton has lectured and sunk pints even more furiously than usual, the two men find themselves back in the New Globe's vast and rapidly blurring lobby, opposite the visiting prime minister. Bilton throws a cup of coffee over him, and is instantly, dizzyingly, turned into a celebrity.

This process — the Bilton news stories, his agent, his talk show appearances, book advances — is supposed to feel like the heart of the book. Martin tries hard to make the details prompt and resonate: Bilton's first interviewer, for example, yawns, Paxman-like, "like a basking shark".

But it's all too familiar. These days every newspaper has an ex-communist on a large salary. The press has long been fickle and hungry enough to outflank straight mockery. The observations here are sharp — there is a "champagne balcony" for the New Globe's cost-cutting managers — but their theme varies as little as the Street Of Shame section in Private Eye.

By about page 130, Martin seems to have run out of plot. Bilton has sold out, triumphantly; his erstwhile colleague chokes back his jealousy like a Martin Amis loser. Then the book is saved by a war. The ridiculed prime minister becomes a roaring national leader, and there is, abruptly, no place on talk shows for the likes of Bilton. The comedy darkens: patriotic drunkards chase Bilton from pubs, and his commissions shrink back to a TV slot called "Blown Away" (for people "whose media careers have gone down the toilet").

The writing deepens, too. As Bilton flees London, Martin opens his tight metropolitan sentences to a wider, more tangible landscape: Cornwall in greyest winter; Scarborough under lowering, sticky skies. The jokes are fresher for the change of air, and gusts of something more affecting blow in off the Atlantic. Bilton loses his hauteur with his hair. And author and anti-hero alike learn something: not all life can be found in newspaper offices.

Cricket Sixth Test: West Indies v England

Atherton heads for the exit

[Mik]e Selvey in St John's

E NOUGH has happened in this series for it to be clear that in this game nothing is [cer]tain. But all the indications on [Mo]nday were that the Mike Ather[ton] era is coming to an end.

He took over the England cap[tain]cy from Graham Gooch 4½ years [ago]. Now, 52 Tests on and with Eng[land] battling to avoid their third [def]eat this week of what in reality [has] been a close series, the chances [are] that the side will have a new [lea]der by the time the South [Afr]icans arrive for the summer.

Set to score 373 to avoid an innings [def]eat, England had reached 173 for [thr]ee at stumps on Monday after [Bri]an Lara had declared the West [Ind]ies innings closed after little more [th]an an hour's play at 500 for seven.

England have done well, although to survive the final day a monumental effort of concentration, application and technique will be required from the remaining batsmen. But Nasser Hussain, at the crease after Mark Butcher had completed a pair by becoming Curtly Ambrose's 30th wicket of the series, has been entrenched for 3½ hours in making 54 and Graham Thorpe, unbeaten on 18, is no stranger to adversity.

The situation on Monday was the sort where England so often call on Atherton, the bloody-minded, stubborn batsman whose centuries rarely carry them to victory but almost without exception make sure they do not lose. His unbeaten 185 in Johannesburg over 11 hours remains a benchmark for defiance; not here, though.

Atherton, on his 30th birthday, made only 13 before he fell victim to Curtly Ambrose for the 15th time in the 41 innings that they have faced one another. There was a terrible familiarity about his demise to a ball slanting in, and it stems from the capacity of Ambrose — a facility given to all great fast bowlers — to be able to operate on four-fifths throttle and then, when the moment suits, to bang in the afterburner.

England have played good cricket throughout the series and this has been the only genuinely one-sided match. It has been Atherton's misfortune, however, not to be blessed with a high-class bowling attack — and that would pertain no matter who was running the side.

West Indies 500 for 7 dec
England 127 and 173 for 3



Atherton departs to West Indian celebrations PHOTO: REBECCA NADEN

'Oh, Calcutta'

THE Australian media showed no mercy to their cricketers after India's crushing victory by an innings and 219 runs in Calcutta in the second Test.

"Oh, Calcutta — our worst defeat in 60 years," ran the Sun-Herald, recalling Australia's actual worst defeat, to England by an innings and 579 runs at The Oval in 1938.

They pointed out that the Australians, having lost the first Test in Madras by 179 runs, had also lost the best-of-three series 2-0 — their first such setback in four years.

Once more they paid the price for woeful batting, being skittled out for 233 and 181 on a wicket good enough for India to amass their highest score against Australia. India declared at 633 for five with their captain Mohammad Azharuddin unbeaten on 163.

Trailing by 400 runs on first innings, the tourists were bowled out again 35 minutes after tea on the fourth day.

[Sp]orts Diary Mike Kiely

[T]oon Army in revolt

NEWCASTLE United have endured a week that they would rather forget, with two [directo]rs embroiled in a tabloid [news]paper scandal that has out[rage]d the self-styled Toon Army of [loc]al supporters, and Kenny [Dalgli]sh's team a mere four points [above] the relegation zone with only [...] games left to play.

The controversy in the board[room] began when chairman Fred[dy] Shepherd and chief executive [Do]uglas Hall were quoted in the [New]s of the World insulting the [wom]en of Tyneside, joking about [the] price supporters pay for replica [shirt]s and referring to star striker [Alan] Shearer as "Mary Poppins".

[Sh]epherd and Hall initially re[fuse]d calls for their resignation [from] a legion of critics that included [Spo]rts Minister Tony Banks. Car[dina]l Basil Hume, Catholic Arch[bish]op of Westminster and a [supp]orter since 1933, commented: "[New]castle have first-rate fans and [deser]ve a first-rate board. It makes [me] very sad." But the two finally [bow]ed to the inevitable on Monday [dur]ing an all-day board meeting [of th]e club's parent company.

[In]dicative of how football in Britain [ha]s become big business, the scan[dal] also had important implications [for] the club's share price, which fell [in re]sponse to the bad publicity.

[C]HELSEA are England's only [r]emaining representative in the [Eur]opean club competitions after [thei]r 3-1 victory over Spanish side [Rea]l Betis at Stamford Bridge gave [the]m a 5-2 aggregate victory and set [up] a semi-final tie against Italian [side] Vicenza in the European Cup [Winn]ers Cup. In the other semi-final, [Stu]ttgart face Locomotiv Moscow.

[In] the Champions League, Man[ch]ester United's 1-1 draw against [Mon]aco at Old Trafford meant Alex [Fergu]son's side went out on the [awa]y goals rule, the first leg having [finis]hed 0-0. Monaco meet Juventus [in th]e semi-finals while Real Madrid [are p]aired with Borussia Dortmund. [A] spectacular goal by Stan Colly[more] gave Aston Villa a 2-1 victory over Atletico Madrid at Villa Park in the Uefa Cup, but the Spanish side progressed, again on the away goals rule, having beaten the Midlands side 1-0 in the first game. Lazio will be their next opponents, while favourites Internazionale play Spartak Moscow.

S TRUGGLING First Division side Manchester City suffered another blow with the resignation of chairman Francis Lee after four years at Maine Road in response to opposition from supporters and the mounting pressure of leading a club fighting to avoid relegation. Lee criticised a succession of managers who had "wasted millions on poor players" and people at the club "who had tried to blacken my name".

B ATH prop Kevin Yates, banned for six months after the London Scottish flanker Simon Fenn had his ear bitten in a cup tie in January, has been fined an undisclosed amount by his club. Bath said in a statement that they considered this latest action would be the final chapter in an unfortunate episode.

E RNIE ELS won the Bay Hill Invitational tournament in Orlando, Florida, after overhauling overnight leader Tiger Woods to claim the first prize of $360,000. However, it was American John Daly with a reputedly record-breaking 18 at the 543-yard 6th who stole many of the headlines. A lake around which the hole curves in a near semi-circle was at the heart of the American's problems on the tee. He explained that the more he tried to miss the water by aiming further right, the more he hooked into the lake. Finally, Daly's sixth tee-shot reached dry land — only for it to nestle in a bunker. Sound familiar?

John Daly: making a splash

T HE British Touring Car Championship received a boost with the news that former Formula One world champion Nigel Mansell would be driving in selected races at the wheel of a Ford Mondeo. Mansell, aged 44, who has also won the IndyCar title, has had his fair share of injuries during an illustrious career and probably won't have forgotten the last time he drove a Mondeo in touring cars — on that occasion, in 1993, he was knocked unconscious following a collision at Donington Park.

T HE battle for supremacy on the sixth leg of the Whitbread Round the World race hotted up as the contestants crossed the equator. Lawrie Smith's Silk Cut led the fleet as it headed towards their destination of Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Meanwhile the first attempt by an all-woman crew to sail non-stop round the world failed when the mast of the Royal & SunAlliance, skippered by Tracy Edwards, snapped 3,200km west of Cape Horn.

B RITAIN'S leading tennis players, Greg Rusedski and Tim Henman, in action at the Lipton Championships in Key Biscayne, Florida, have decided to forget their sometimes bitter rivalry in the approach to the crucial Davis Cup match against Ukraine next month. "When it comes to representing your country, that comes before family feuds," said Henman. As the tie against Ukraine is taking place in Newcastle, it may be advisable for the pair to avoid talking to any tabloids in the interim.

Shiv Sharma is away

Football Nationwide League First Division

Boro lack Merson's touch

George Caulkin at The Riverside

THE need for the mercurial qualities of a reformed thirty-something hell-raiser at Middlesbrough will finally be sated on Thursday, but it will be Paul Merson returning from international duty after England's friendly in Berne against Switzerland rather than the possible signing of Paul Gascoigne, on whom Bryan Robson's hopes for automatic promotion will surely rest.

Without Merson, Middlesbrough are little better than pedestrian. Yes, they comfortably overcame Norwich City 3-0, yet it was a performance stoutly buttressed by the mediocrity of the opposition.

For a 20-minute spell midway through the first half, during which Neil Maddison cushioned a long punt by Gianluca Festa and volleyed his fourth goal in six games, Robson's side briefly looked like genuine candidates for the Premiership. It was a fleeting mirage. "On this performance, I would have to say that Sunderland and Forest are more likely to go up," remarked the Norwich manager Mike Walker, although he also admitted: "I know Boro are better than that."

They will have to be, if their third consecutive visit to Wembley is to have a different conclusion from the previous pair. Robson said that he had been using this Sunday's Coca-Cola Cup final with Chelsea as a spur to his players — "I've been asking them who wants to play in a cup final" — but if this was their response, Blues boss Gianluca Vialli will hardly be quaking in his boots.

Victory was made certain only in the 71st minute, when Maddison centred from the right and Alun Armstrong flung out a boot to divert the ball beyond Andy Marshall. An extra coat of gloss was added by the substitute Mikkel Beck, who converted Maddison's low shot after an extended goalmouth scramble.

● Sheffield United and Arsenal won their FA Cup quarter-final replays, against Coventry City and West Ham United respectively, on penalties. United face Newcastle in the semi-finals, while Arsenal will play Wolverhampton Wanderers. Both ties to be played on April 5.

Football results

NATIONWIDE FOOTBALL LEAGUE:
Division One:
Birmingham City 1, Nottingham Forest 2; Bury 1, Oxford United 0; Crewe Alexandra 0, Charlton Athletic 3; Ipswich Town 3, Wolverhampton Wanderers 0; Manchester City 0, Sheffield United 0; Middlesbrough 3, Norwich City 0; Reading 0, Huddersfield Town 2; Stoke City 2, Queens Park Rangers 1; Sunderland 2, Portsmouth 1; Swindon Town 1, Stockport County 1; Tranmere Rovers 3, Bradford City 1; West Bromwich Albion 2, Port Vale 2.
Leading positions: 1, Nottm Forest (played 38-points 77); 2, Middlesbrough (38-75); 3, Sunderland (38-73).

Division Two:
Blackpool 2, Gillingham 1; Brentford 0, Northampton 0; Bristol R 2, Preston 2; Chesterfield 2, Carlisle 1; Luton 2, Grimsby 2; Millwall 1, Burnley 0; Oldham 2, Watford 2; Plymouth 2, Bristol City 0; Southend 5, Bournemouth 3; Walsall 1, Wigan 0; Wrexham 2, Wycombe 0; York 0, Fulham 1.
Leading positions: 1, Watford (39-76); 2, Bristol City (38-72); 3, Wrexham (38-63).

Division Three:
Brighton 0, Cambridge 2; Doncaster 2, Lincoln 4; Hull 0, Cardiff 1; Leyton Orient 2, Darlington 0; Macclesfield 2, Shrewsbury 1; Mansfield 3, Exeter 2; Notts Co 0, Colchester 0; Peterborough 2, Chester 1; Rochdale 2, Hartlepool 1; Scunthorpe 1, Rotherham 1; Swansea 0, Scarborough 0; Torquay 0, Barnet 0.
Leading positions: 1, Notts County (39-85); 2, Torquay (39-69); 3, Macclesfield (39-66).

BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE:
Premier Division:
Aberdeen 0, Celtic 1; Dundee U 0, Hearts 1; Hibernian 1, Motherwell 0; Kilmarnock 3, Dunfermline 0; Rangers 2, St Johnstone 1.
Leading positions: 1, Celtic (29-62); 2, Hearts (29-60); 3, Rangers (29-57).

First Division:
Airdrie 1, Stirling A 0; Morton 1, Partick 0; Hamilton 1, Dundee 2; Raith 0, Ayr 0; St Mirren 1, Falkirk 2.
Leading positions: 1, Dundee (29-62); 2, Falkirk (29-51); 3, Raith (29-50).

Second Division:
Brechin 0, Clyde 2; Livingston 2, East Fife 2; Stenhousemuir 0, Clydebank 0; Stranraer 4, Forfar 0; Inverness CT 0, Queen Sth 2.
Leading positions: 1, Clydebank (29-50); 2, Livingston (28-48); 3, Stranraer (29-43).

Third Division:
Alloa 3, Albion 1; Berwick 1, Ross Co 1; Cowdenbeath 1, Queens Pk 2; Dumbarton 1, Arbroath 2; Montrose 1, East Stirling 1.
Leading positions: 1, Alloa (28-64); 2, Arbroath (28-61); 3, Ross County (28-50).

Vested interests march to preserve status quo

FIRST there was West versus East, then the North-South Divide, then Fortress Europe; now we have Town versus Countryside (The day London turned into a shire, March 8). This latest manifestation of public unease, regardless of the myriad individual motivations of those involved, fails to observe the fact that we are all part of a crucial, intricate and dynamic whole. We all need each other, we all belong to the Global Village — the rural community is literally the life-blood for the urban way of life; there should be no enmity between them.

The Countryside Movement in Britain is full of inevitable and unfortunate contradictions but it has certainly put its finger on the pulse of a real anxiety — the systematic destruction of the environment, a concern that unites the vast majority of the UK population and concerns a growing number of MPs at Westminster.

Why then this feeling of confrontation? I'm afraid the answer is political — the movement has been separated from its natural grassroots support, resulting in some pretty strange bedfellows.

To see the leader of the opposition, William Hague, and the Environment Minister, Michael Meacher, the landed gentry and living Marxists, 30-year-old Land Rovers and the latest Japanese four-wheel-drives, members of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, Friends of the Earth and the Ramblers all apparently united, can appear both confusing and scary.

Make no mistake, however, the real strength and the real money funding the media barrage came from those who have the most to lose for they already have everything — they own the country. For the time being, they seem to have lost control of the Government and they don't like it much.

It is farcical to blame a government less than a year old for the deprivation of the countryside. This is the result of 20 years of free-rein market forces, nurtured so lovingly by Margaret Thatcher. Nearly all sections of society have felt the effects of this, from the steel, mining and car industries, to building societies, the health service and education. Now it appears to be the turn of the farmers.

It is similarly myopic to contend that the Labour party is not concerned about the plight of the most disenfranchised members of our society. And farm labourers and the rural unemployed certainly qualify for that dubious status.
Ricky Knight,
Bishop's Tawton, North Devon

Raising barriers to peace

THE killing of the three Palestinians near Hebron highlights crucial problems in how Israel enforces security in the West Bank (Israel resists EU role in peace moves, March 22). Palestinians have had a "checkpoint" culture imposed on them, with more than 40 military checkpoints in the West Bank, as well as 27 in the Gaza Strip. These do not include surprise checkpoints.

Palestinians have been shot at these checkpoints before, and Bet'selem, the Israeli human rights group, has reported on many cases of sexual harassment, including forcing 15 Palestinian women to undress in front of their children on the pretext of a search for weapons. Pregnant Palestinian women have even been denied access to hospitals in Jerusalem and have given birth at checkpoints.

To travel from Bethlehem to Jerusalem can mean a wait of up to two hours for Palestinians. Identity cards are demanded at gunpoint. Four permits are required for a Palestinian to enter Jerusalem to work — an ID card, a magnetic ID card, a work permit and an entry permit. Israeli settlers are excused such treatment and even have their own road system.
David Watkins,
Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding, London

PETER D JONES argues that the West has to refrain from double standards in its dealings with Iraq and Israel (March 8). Would Mr Jones trust a psychopath as much as he would a sane person with more honourable aspirations, and thus make equal demands on both? More to the point, does he believe that Iraq and Israel have to be treated identically because he sees no differences between the respective behaviour, morality, intentions and trustworthiness of the two countries?

All nations — indeed all people — employ different standards for those with whom they have dealings. A primary reason for this is that some people or nations are more reliable and honourable, more "like us", than others. According to Western values and standards, Israel, for all its failings, is clearly a better, more principled member of the community of nations than Iraq under Saddam Hussein.
Geoffrey Zygier,
Malvern, Victoria, Australia

DID I miss the swingeing condemnation by the ethical British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, of the killings of innocent civilians and the gassing and stun-grenading of children on the West Bank? Or does he only condemn what he is allowed to by the United States state department?
Nigel Press,
Hatfield, Hertfordshire

Deadly dose of anthrax

THE information on Iraq provided by Dr Robin Eastman-Abaya in his letter is misleading in the extreme (March 22). Untreated cutaneous anthrax has a case-fatality rate between 5 and 20 per cent. The form of the disease associated with inhalation is far more sinister, which is the reason it has been developed as a biological warfare agent.

In 1979, 96 cases of inhalation anthrax, with 64 deaths, were ascertained in Sverdlosk, Russia, after a plume containing an aerosol came out of a research institute specialising in biological warfare studies. The volume of anthrax organisms was estimated to be less than one drop; and the total number of cases and deaths may well have been much larger than acknowledged. There is no doubt that Saddam Hussein has produced many thousands of litres of anthrax organisms suitable for aerosol dispersion, and further large volumes may still be hidden. It is likely that these organisms have been genetically-engineered for antibiotic resistance, making subsequent human infections difficult to treat.

So it is understandable that the United States and Britain are taking this potential threat seriously, and 2 million US troops are being immunised with the vaccine developed by the Michigan Department of Public Health. The old axiom is still true: the best way to avoid war is to be prepared for it.
(Dr) Timothy Johnstone,
Victoria, BC, Canada

WITH the news of Saddam's plans to smuggle anthrax into the UK (Saddam anthrax plot warning, March 24), the abolition of duty free shopping is surely now more urgent than ever.
Phil Woodford,
London

Opening the door to recruits

PERHAPS VSO should look critically at its own selection processes before blaming people for becoming more selfish and less caring, when seeking to explain a slump in applications (VSO fights shortage of recruits, March 8).

My own application was met with a number of hurdles, where recruiters seemed intent on proving I could not be successful.

Without the benefit of VSO training and support I am completing two years teaching in China, privately arranged. Perhaps potential applicants should be encouraged rather than dissuaded.
Ginny Eley,
Taian, China

IF THE numbers of people opting for overseas voluntary work is declining, it could be that news has got out that while they stand to sacrifice tens of thousands in income, many of the wealthy classes (local and expatriate) in the host country are living it up on international aid money so generously given by the uninformed in the Western world.
David Hayter,
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

I AGREE with Andrew Jackson (March 15) that deciding to apply for two years overseas with VSO is no light matter. I put it off for many reasons, once I was free of maternal duties, for such mundane things as making sure that my pension would be secure while I was away and that my home would still be there to return to.

However, I was gratified to be selected last year, at the ripe old age of 62. VSO are blissfully free of ageism and appreciate that older people have years of professional experience behind us.

In addition to the skills acquired during my teaching years in Pakistan, I have had to learn to be computer-literate so will be returning home in 1999 with that to offer.
Ann Thorp,
Karachi, Pakistan

Erratum: In an article headed The BBC crosses the Rubicon (March 29) it should have said that the BBC will own 100 per cent, not 50 per cent, of BBC America. The BBC will run, and schedule the channel, Discovery will market it.

Briefly

ACCORDING to Martin Walker, if European Union policies were as brutal and inhuman as those of the United States and Margaret Thatcher's Britain, "the EU would be richer today and would have had 6 million unemployed instead of 18 million" (February 22).

How does he know this? Perhaps he can explain to us mortals the unprecedented rise in poverty and inequality in income distribution in the US and the UK over the past 20 years. He should also tell who exactly in the EU would have been richer, how much more carbon dioxide would have been emitted, and why the UK, the star pupil of the OECD, grew at an average rate of 1.7 per cent from 1989 to 1996 compared with 2.1 per cent for the EU as a whole.
C-Rene Dominique,
Laval university, Quebec, Canada

WHAT might BAT's socially acceptable addictive alternative to cigarette have been (February 22)? I believe I know. A few years ago a number of BAT executives from the United States appeared on television, each reciting "Nicotine is not addictive."

I found this so questionable that I wrote to BAT asking if I had heard correctly. Their doctor replied, confirming that my hearing was excellent. And she assured me that nicotine was no more addictive than ratatouille.

So there we have it. Just imagine what ratatouille dependency could have done for BAT and the world's courgette and aubergine growers.
(Rev) David Walford,
Mitcham Junction, Surrey

IF THE Church of England is culturally light years behind the rest of society (March 29), how much further behind is the Roman Catholic Church, run by an ageing Pope presiding over an organisation still unhealthily male-dominated, unable to accord females equality of status and esteem?
Edwin Townsend-Coles,
Oxford

RICHARD WILLIAMS recently insulted Kate Winslet in his review of Titanic by insinuating that she was overweight. Now he gives an inaccurate review of As Good As It Gets (March 22).

He describes Jack Nicholson berating a cat, whereas it was actually a dog. Perhaps your reviewer could watch the films he is writing about: he might then spot the difference between a pooch and a moggy, and realise that Winslet is an attractive young woman whose weight is irrelevant.
John Graham-Cumming,
Palo Alto, California, USA



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Welcome to Indonesia's Campus of Struggle

Andrew Higgins on the rising tide of student unrest against President Suharto's regime

ON A five-a-side football pitch commandeered as the headquarters of Indonesia's campus revolt, a huddle of student activists gathers around a television for a lesson on the tactics and terror of rebellion.

The screen flickers with images of a disaster they hope to avoid as they challenge the now geriatric New Order that has governed Indonesia for 32 years. It shows tanks rolling into Tiananmen Square.

"The students in Tiananmen are our brothers and sisters. But they failed. We don't want to fail," says Agus Gede, a 22-year-old student leader at the University of Indonesia. "We want to learn from their failure."

Their goal is no less ambitious than that of Chinese students silenced by the People's Liberation Army in Beijing in 1989 — the end of President Suharto's monopoly of power, a political and business cartel as tenaciously guarded as that of the Chinese Communist Party.

The trigger for their protests is economic, a crisis that has ravaged Indonesia's currency, raised the spectre of widespread hunger, turned a model of development into a wayward ward of the International Monetary Fund and left nearly every company on the Jakarta stock exchange technically bankrupt.

Their ultimate target, though, is the "old man", as Indonesians call the 76-year-old master of the New Order.

A month of protest and sporadic clashes with police has put Indonesia's students in the vanguard of a movement for political change. In a country of 202 million people scattered over 17,500 islands, their numbers are relatively small. But the foment on campuses across the former Dutch colony could presage a wider campaign against the world's longest-serving ruler after Fidel Castro.

"People always look to our youth. This is a basic fact of our national life. Our modern state comes from the students," said Hariman Siregar, a medical doctor who spent three years in jail for leading an abortive student movement in 1974. "We have never had a change of government without the students . . . If the students are protesting, the country is really in crisis."

The students' fate, though, will depend not on their own strength but, as was the case in Beijing in 1989, on the military.

"The military has to make a decision: to crush the students or support them . . . They used the students to overthrow Sukarno. In 1974 they crushed us. Now they don't know. They are buying time," said Dr Hariman.

Senior generals are now manoeuvring for the trust of student leaders, though it remains unclear, possibly even to themselves, whether their aim is to silence or exploit their anger.

A newly installed commander of the armed forces, General Wiranto, has described the students' demands — which range from calls for cheap rice to coded assaults on Gen Suharto — as "normal". At the same time, though, authorities have cracked down firmly on all attempts to take protests off campus and into the streets to join forces with a swelling army of unemployed and impoverished, but so far unorganised, workers.

Until last week the University of Indonesia greeted visitors with a sign celebrating its role as a centre for the 1960s protests that helped bring Gen Suharto to power: "Welcome to the Campus of the Struggle of the New Order". The sign was removed after a student used spray paint to produce an abbreviated message: "Welcome to the Campus of Struggle".

"I think in the end they will crush the students," Dr Hariman said. "The military has no guts against Suharto . . .". He does not understand the economy but he understands how to buy people and how to kill people. He understands the army."

Indonesia's students are in the vanguard of a growing protest movement PHOTOGRAPH: CHARLES DHARAPAK

Four die in camp riots

RIOTS at a Malaysian detention camp for illegal immigrants left three Indonesians and a policeman dead last week, exposing the problems facing Kuala Lumpur as tens of thousands of workers flee economic turmoil in Indonesia to search for work, *writes Nick Cumming-Bruce in Bangkok.*

The deaths occurred at Semenyih camp, 40km from the capital, one of four into which police moved before dawn last Friday to extract hundreds of inmates for forcible repatriation. Witnesses said fires broke out and shooting erupted, lasting several minutes.

A police spokesman said 38 people were also injured.

A local human rights organisation, Suaram, said at least five people were killed.

Police used water cannon and tear gas at another camp on the west coast against inmates who set fire to their barracks. At a camp in the southwest, around 140 inmates escaped during a deportation operation. But several hundred inmates were taken from camps to the port of Lumut and loaded on to a waiting Indonesian naval vessel.

The deportations were particularly sensitive as inmates from the troubled Aceh area of Indonesia's northern island of Sumatra were taken. The area is the subject of a ferociously suppressed movement for regional autonomy.

Human rights groups fear that some of the Acehnese inmates may be genuine refugees who could face torture or worse if sent back. A spokesman for the Aceh-Sumatra National Liberation Front in Sweden, who claimed that 24 inmates were killed in last week's rioting, said the Indonesians had no choice but to resist, because "once they reach Indonesia it will be death for them".

But the Acehnese are only a small part of a broader and quickly escalating problem posed for Malaysia and Singapore by tens of thousands of illegal immigrants from all parts of Indonesia as the world's fourth most populous country slides deeper into economic recession and human misery.

The number of those out of work in Indonesia has doubled to 8.7 million — roughly 10 per cent of the workforce — in eight months, a manpower ministry spokesman was quoted as saying last week.

Such bald statistics do little to reveal the hardship in a country where even in years of prosperity millions eked out a living doing odd jobs or part-time work, and where rocketing prices have put even milk beyond the reach of the poor.

The latest repatriation drive coincides with an effort by Malaysia to cut the number of foreign migrant labourers in the country. This group reportedly numbers about 3 million, of which half are Indonesian, in a workforce of about 8 million.

'Angel' revives right-to-die debate

Christopher Reed in Los Angeles

A CALIFORNIA hospital therapist allegedly confessed to killing up to 50 elderly patients, it emerged last week, raising again the controversy about artificially prolonging life.

Efren Saldivar, aged 28, a respiratory therapist at Glendale Adventist Hospital in Los Angeles allegedly told police "about his anger at seeing patients kept alive as opposed to the guilt he would feel at the failure of providing life-saving care".

The same hospital was the subject of a 1984 court case on behalf of a 70-year-old terminally ill man, William Bartling. He was on a respirator but his repeated pleas to be disconnected were ignored. A court heard that when he removed the respirator himself, his hands were tied to the bed.

Although the first judge ruled in favour of the hospital, this was overturned by a higher court four months later, by which time Mr Bartling had died.

After Mr Saldivar's "confession" was disclosed at the weekend, the hospital revealed that all its 44 respiratory therapists had been suspended and were being interviewed.

The therapists, who monitor and assist patients coming out of surgery, are regarded as front-line workers who see the worst cases.

"You see suffering, people with bed sores, gaping wounds from staph bacteria, or they blow up like dough with severe infections — and there is nothing you can do. The frustration builds up over many years," said therapist Greg Basile, who works at another hospital.

Mr Saldivar allegedly told the police that he had three rules governing which patients he terminated: they had to be unconscious; had to have given prior orders not to be resuscitated in a crisis, and had to show signs that they were dying. When asked if he considered himself "an angel of death", he replied "yes", police said.

Mr Saldivar may never be charged with murder. Confessions alone are insufficient evidence and pathologists say that even with exhumations, the drugs he allegedly used may be untraceable.

● An elderly woman who died in Oregon after taking a cocktail of lethal drugs became the first person in the United States to commit assisted suicide legally. Oregon ratified a law last autumn to allow the terminally ill to kill themselves with doctors' help.

The Week

ARKANSAS law will allow two boys accused of killing five people at their school to own guns when they leave the juvenile justice system. Only adult lawbreakers can be permanently banned from owning guns.
Washington Post, page 14

THE four US marines whose military jet severed a gondola cable at an Italian ski resort in February, causing 20 people to plunge to their death, have been charged with negligent homicide and involuntary manslaughter.

A NEW emergency cable designed to restore power to Auckland failed, trapping people in lifts and halting traffic just as the five-week electricity shortage in New Zealand seemed over.

CONTINUATION of the trial of Maurice Papon for crimes against humanity was in doubt as the former Vichy official left Bordeaux after hearing that his wife of 66 years had died.

CAMBODIA'S deposed first prime minister, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, returned from nearly nine months in exile amid heightened fears for his security after one of his military officers was murdered.

UKRAINE'S Communist Party and other leftwing movements made sweeping gains in parliamentary elections, reflecting anger among the 38 million voters that they are materially worse off seven years after independence from Moscow.

GUNMEN captured several Tajik soldiers and killed at least 20 in one of the most serious outbreaks of violence since the government and mostly Muslim opposition in the former Soviet republic ended a five-year civil war last summer.

INTERNATIONAL powers backed away from their threats of immediate punishment for Yugoslavia's president, Slobodan Milosevic, over his policies of violence and repression in Kosovo and gave him four more weeks to deliver concessions.

INDIA'S supreme court agreed to hear the appeals of 26 people convicted in January of the assassination of the prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi, in 1991.

GERMANY'S biggest computer online service, T-Online, was forced to issue its 2 million customers with new software after two 16-year-old boys hacked into the service and obtained access codes and passwords for more than 600 customers.

GANGS of Romanian orphans, trained and beaten into obedience by adult criminals, have stolen millions of German marks as pickpockets over the past two years, Cologne police said.



Yeltsin dares MPs to reject Kiriyenko

Tom Whitehouse in Moscow

PRESIDENT Boris Yeltsin confirmed last week that the acting prime minister, Sergei Kiriyenko, was his choice to take on the job permanently, and threatened to dissolve parliament if it failed to ratify the appointment.

"I'm just saying as president, save time, confirm him quickly," he said after announcing that he had asked Mr Kiriyenko, aged 35, to lead his government. "If you reject him once, twice, three times, then the fourth time means dissolution," he said.

The president, capping a remarkable week which he started by sacking his entire cabinet, said Mr Kiriyenko had risen rapidly and would now need to move even faster.

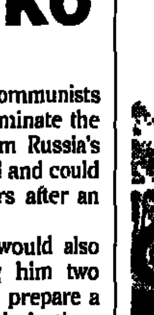
In response to the threat of dissolution, the parliamentary Speaker, Gennady Seleznyov, who has already rejected Mr Kiriyenko's candidacy, said parliament would not be bullied. "The state Duma does not fear threats. Both the president and his speechwriters must know this," he warned.

But he added: "We will not give any constitutional ground to dissolve the Duma. I don't think the president wants a replay of 1993."

Despite Mr Seleznyov's reference to Mr Yeltsin's 1993 bombing of parliament, there is little chance of a repeat performance this year.

Nor does he actually need to bomb parliament into submission, because this time he has the constitution on his side, which is not surprising, given that he rewrote it after the violence four years ago.

Despite the mutual threats, both the president and the Duma may actually be happy with the prospect of early elections. The communists and nationalists, who dominate the Duma, stand to gain from Russia's present anti-Yeltsin mood and could return in bigger numbers after an election.



Early polls this year would also help Mr Yeltsin, giving him two clear years to name and prepare a successor for presidential elections in 2000.

To add to the confusion, the sacked prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, announced at the weekend that he would run for president.

However, a senior figure in parliament's upper house, the governor of the Samara region, Konstantin Titov, said the Duma would be wise to Mr Yeltsin's ruse and would approve Mr Kiriyenko. "It will approve him, not because it is scared of the president but to make the government responsible for its failures in the economy and use this in the next elections," he said.

James Meek in Moscow adds: Helmut Kohl and Jacques Chirac held a three-way European summit with Mr Yeltsin last week in which Britain was conspicuously absent.

Tony Blair was not invited to take part in the meeting — which discussed Iraq, Kosovo and European security — when it was arranged by the French and Russian presidents in Strasbourg last October, indicating that Moscow considers Britain too pro-American to be included.

The Kremlin, backed by Paris, wants the "troika" summits to be held regularly as a sign that Europe need not follow the United States in foreign policy and security.

Martin Walker, page 6
Washington Post, page 13



Weapons inspectors in Baghdad on their way to the Radwaniyah Palace PHOTOGRAPH: PAWEL KOPCZYNSKI

UN experts make speedy tours of palaces

Dominic Evans

UNITED NATIONS weapons experts and diplomats have entered all but two of Iraq's highly sensitive presidential sites, a senior inspector said on Monday.

Diplomats said earlier there had been no major problems at the sites, which were at the centre of a storm last month until Iraq signed an accord pledging access to UN Special Commission (Unscom) inspectors, together with the diplomats.

"We are making progress," the Unscom deputy chairman, Charles Duelfer, said in a statement.

Unscom, charged with dismantling Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, believes Iraq has consistently concealed material related to banned weapons programmes.

Iraq says it destroyed all its biological and chemical weapons and long-range ballistic missiles after it lost the 1991 Gulf war and was forced out of Kuwait.

The visits to the presidential sites began last week. They mark the first time that Unscom has inspected any of the eight sites in seven years of disarmament work. The United States threatened to launch military strikes on Baghdad before Iraq backed down last month and allowed their inspection.

But Mr Duelfer stressed that the visits were rapid surveys of the grounds, not detailed examination. "If you work out the time spent against the number of buildings, we can spend on average 15 minutes per building."

He described the dealings with Iraqi officials as amicable and non-confrontational, and said "senior figures" were on hand to deal swiftly with problems.

Diplomats say Iraq's deputy prime minister, Tariq Aziz, has attended the visits in order to deal with the problems arising over disagreements about the perimeter of the sites. — *Reuters*

Inquiry held into 'coup plot' against S African government

David Beresford in Cape Town

SOUTH AFRICAN military commanders appeared before a judicial tribunal last weekend to answer questions about an intelligence report which claimed that well-known personalities, including Winnie Mandela, were plotting a coup against the government.

There was speculation in the press that the head of the South African National Defence Force, General Georg Meiring, might be sacked because of the report, which is widely regarded as a fabrication.

The judicial commission is believed to be investigating why the intelligence report was presented to Nelson Mandela without being cross-checked against other intelligence sources, cleared by the national intelligence co-ordinating committee, or shown to the minister of defence.

The report names Gen Meiring's likely successor, Lieutenant-General Siphiwe Nyanda, as the chief plotter and claims that a young diplomat, Robert McBride — currently in detention in Mozambique on gun-running charges — was supplying weapons.

The report is believed to have been based on allegations by a paid agent of military intelligence who was also arrested in Mozambique, seemingly after leading Mr McBride into a trap.

It is suspected that the coup allegations were an attempt to destabilise the Mandela government.

Gen Meiring said that the report was submitted to the president on February 5, well before Mr McBride's arrest. The former Transkei leader General Bantu Holomisa — who is also named as one of the plotters — said the report had been given to Mr Mandela on March 5, and expressed surprise that it had taken so long for the president to act.

Mr Mandela said that if any coup attempt were mounted, it would be quickly crushed. "We are supremely confident that we are in total control. Any attempt, if made, will be blotted out quickly and decisively."

● The anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko was beaten with a hose-pipe, then left naked, manacled to a gate in a crucifix position, said Gideon Nieuwoudt, one of the policemen who took part in the assault.

He was describing to South Africa's truth commission the last hours of the black consciousness leader. Mr Nieuwoudt is the fifth police officer to testify to the commission in support of an amnesty for the death of Biko, who was killed in police custody 20 years ago.

Yanomami flee fires raging through Amazon

Alex Bellos in Rio de Janeiro

THE indigenous Yanomami have begun to flee their villages as the fires raging in the northern Amazon burn deeper into their reservation.

More than 20 Yanomami living in the settlement closest to the fires have left their homes, said Alan Suassuña, of Brazil's National Indigenous Foundation (Funai).

"There was so much smoke there that it was unbearable. They decided to move further into the reservation," he said.

He added that the area affected — Ajarani — was sparsely populated and that no other settlements were immediately threatened. However, Brazilian newspaper reports say that many of the 500 villagers in Baixo Mucajai are going hungry because smoke from the fires has frightened away the animals they hunt.

About 20,000 Yanomami live in a reservation the size of Portugal which spreads from Brazil's northernmost state, Roraima, into Venezuela. They are the world's largest primitive tribe.

A team of specialists from the United Nations Environment Programme arrived in Brazil this week to measure the extent of the damage, more than four months after the UN's initial offer to send a delegation. Brazil only accepted the offer last week, upsetting its armed forces, which view the Amazon as a national security issue and are sensitive to outside interference.

The fires, which have been burning for three months, are the worst in the history of the northern Amazon. The international effort to combat them comprises more than 1,300 men, including more than 100 from Venezuela.

The state government says fires are now under control in the region of Apiau, 120km from the state capital, Boa Vista, which has been the worst hit by the blaze. But strong winds last week have spread the inferno south.

Localised fires are also appearing further north, and have invaded the island ecological station of Maraca, which contains examples of every known plant and animal species in the region.

The fires were started by subsistence farmers burning land to make it more fertile, and aggravated by an El Niño-induced drought. It has not rained since last year and none is predicted until the end of this month.

● Philippines officials said that they would ask other countries to lend firefighting planes to help put out a fire destroying virgin forests in the western province of Palawan.

Athletes given abortion order

Denis Staunton in Berlin

EAST GERMAN athletes were ordered to have abortions because, it was feared, their use of anabolic steroids could have led to mutant offspring, a report in Der Spiegel claimed last week.

The magazine says police in Berlin and the eastern state of Thuringia are using evidence from the Stasi secret police's files to investigate former sports officials, doctors and trainers.

Four former East German trainers and two sports doctors are currently on trial in Berlin for their part in the systematic doping of young swimmers. The defendants, the first to be tried after an investigation into the use of steroids by state swimmers, are accused of causing actual bodily harm between 1974 and 1989 to 19 female swimmers while they were still children or adolescents.

Manfred Höppner, the former head of East Germany's sport medicine service, recommended that athletes who became pregnant while on the steroids should be advised "to terminate their pregnancy". Doctors feared the steroids might cause a female embryo to mutate into "a strongly masculine type".

Clergy split over civil war apology

Adela Gooch in Madrid

A SUGGESTION that Spain's bishops ask forgiveness for the Catholic Church's support of General Francisco Franco's dictatorship has split the clergy.

Opponents of an apology, while acknowledging that the Church turned a blind eye to Franco's purges after the civil war of 1936-39, remain angry that hundreds of nuns and priests suffered in the run-up to the war at the hands of leftwing extremists.

The debate has pitted the country's top two clerics against each other. Cardinal Antonio Maria Rouco Varela, Archbishop of Madrid, argues that the Church's political impartiality following Franco's death in 1975 exonerates it. And, he says, a breakaway group of clergy who began working with opponents of the Franco regime in the late 1960s proved a key element in Spain's adoption of democracy.

"Many Catholics, not just those in the Church hierarchy, worked hard and effectively to achieve Spain's successful transition to democracy," he said. "The rest should be left to historians and to the judgment of future generations."

But Spain's other cardinal, Ricard Maria Carles, Archbishop of Barcelona, while not fully backing the call for an apology, has proposed a "gesture of reconciliation".

The idea of a Church apology, first mooted by Joan Carrera, the assistant bishop of Barcelona, has received warm support in Catalonia and the Basque Country. These areas suffered most under Franco's harsh, centralising regime. A number of prominent socialists, the Madrid leftwing daily El País and Catalonia's main paper, La Vanguardia, have also backed the plan. "If Spanish bishops don't ask forgiveness now, they run the risk of the Church doing so over their heads, as happened in the case of Germany," said an El País editorial.

The proposal's advocates argue that next year's anniversary of the end of the civil war would be a particularly appropriate time for the Church to express regret for collaborating with Franco.

Following the Vatican's publication of a document on the Nazi Holocaust last week, Bishop Carrera is also pushing for an apology to cover the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 by Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand. "I do not condemn the lady but I don't think she should be canonised either," he said, referring to a campaign to make the queen a saint.

A Church apology would follow in the wake of apologetic gestures by the Spanish state. In 1992, the 500th anniversary of the expulsion of the Jews, King Juan Carlos acknowledged it had been "a mistake" which deprived Spain of rich cultures and a tradition of religious tolerance. This year the conservative government agreed to compensate the losers in the civil war and passed a decree to restore property and bank accounts to political parties, trade unions and militia groups. But many clergymen have not forgotten the attacks by the extremists who sacked monasteries and convents, set fire to churches and killed clerics.

Cardinal Carles's proposal for a gesture of reconciliation is said to have found favour with the Vatican, which has suggested waiting until 2000 and linking the reconciliation statement to a special holy year at the shrine of St James in Santiago de Compostela, rather than to the more politically sensitive civil war anniversary.

Belgians unite against separatism

Stephen Bates in Brussels

A HIGHLY unusual coalition of Belgium's great and good has declared its mission to save the country as a federal state.

The group, called B Plus, includes senior members of the country's divided language groups. It brings together Walloon (French-speaking) businessmen from the south, artists and writers from the Flemish (Dutch-speaking) north, and figures from the German-speaking part of eastern Belgium.

They believe their initiative has come not a moment too soon. In the wake of several administrative and criminal scandals over the past two years — such as the paedophile ring in Wallonia — talk of splitting the state has revived as parties gear up for next year's general election.

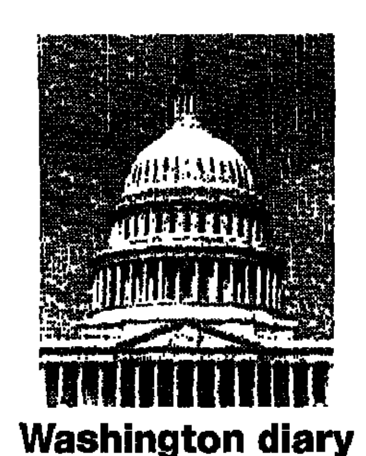
"We believe Belgium must have a future for the sake of democracy," said Mark Dubrulle, managing director of B Plus. "If people cannot live together here, what future is there for Europe?" The group plans to promote the cause of Belgium as a unified state, albeit one which has six parliaments to cater for different language groups and levels of government.

The launch has been sharpened by recent disagreements between Flemish and French speakers centred on Brussels. One was a row over the balance of recruitment to the fire service. Although Brussels is 85 per cent francophone, it is in the Flemish region and Flemings have traditionally been given up to 30 per cent of public sector jobs in the capital. Attempts to change this ended in deadlock until politicians agreed on a precise recruiting balance. In future 29.48 per cent of Brussels firemen will be Flemish.

Then there is the Flemish government's order to the six local authorities around the fringe of Brussels, which have traditionally conducted business bilingually, to issue documents in Dutch only. Francophones would have to apply each time they wanted to receive a document in French.

Pressure for a split is all coming from the Flemish who, having been for most of Belgium's 160-year history dependent on the wealth of the industrial south, now find themselves economically more prosperous and resentful of having to support the French-speaking workforce of declining heavy industries.

Held to ransom by the gun lobby



Washington diary

Martin Kettle

IT MAY seem perverse, just a week after the Jonesboro school shootings, to claim that the United States has "brilliantly" fulfilled the aims of its founding fathers and become an optimistic, tolerant, generous and just society. Yet that is exactly what we are invited to believe in an important new book, One Nation After All, by Alan Wolfe, a sociology professor at Boston university.

The disjunction between the America that was revealed at Jonesboro and the America in Professor Wolfe's research is so great that it is hard to believe that they co-exist in one country at the same time.

Jonesboro has been a genuinely shocking experience. "How could such a thing happen?" is the question asked across the land. And for many, the killings have revived the US's long and unresolved argument about gun control. In the past, officials of the National Rifle Association have been notoriously paranoid in their responses to events like Jonesboro. In December 1994 an NRA vice-president, Neal Knox, wrote in a gun magazine that the assassinations of John F Kennedy and Martin Luther King, as well as earlier schoolyard killing sprees, were conspiracies by anti-gun activists to whip up support for the gun control cause.

This time the NRA responded with a little more tact. Yet it won only time by its caution, since in a long-running campaign that mystifies foreign observers the association has actually been in the forefront of attempts to encourage gun use among children.

Gun production in the US, though still enormous, has declined, falling from 4.4 million guns in 1989 to 3.8 million in 1996. Most industry executives think the adult male shooting market has become saturated, so with the failure of attempts to market guns to women shooters the attention has switched, openly and explicitly, to children.

In a recent NRA advert the association's president, Marion Hammer, is pictured with her rifle and her grandson. "The future of the shooting sports and our Second Amendment [embodying the right "to keep and bear" arms] will rest on the shoulders of our grandchildren — and theirs," says the ad. Hammer's probable successor, the actor Charlton Heston, has said that he wants the NRA to raise $100 million over three years to promote guns to children like his six-year-old grandson.

There is no evidence that the increased marketing of guns to children led to the Jonesboro shootings, and local feeling is strong that it was the children, not the guns, that were to blame. Nevertheless rural Arkansas is one of several areas in the US where gun licensing to children is legal and where a gun is a quite normal Christmas present to a boy from the age of 10 upwards.

WE INTERRUPT THIS PROGRAM WITH A SPECIAL NEWS UPDATE...
THE TRAGIC MASSACRE OF ARKANSAS STUDENTS AT THE HANDS OF THEIR CLASSMATES IS FOLLOWING A DISTURBING NATIONAL TREND
AFTER 3 SIMILAR INSTANCES IN RECENT MONTHS, GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ARE SEARCHING FOR CLUES ABOUT WHY AMERICAN YOUTH HAVE TURNED TO SUCH COLD-BLOODED VIOLENCE.
THAT'S THE NEWS UPDATE...
WE RETURN YOU TO "TERMINATING-PSYCHO STREETGANG FIREPOWER WARRIORS FROM HELL II"
YES!

Much of this gun culture is rooted in the South, and it is striking that the recent schoolyard massacres have occurred in Mississippi, Kentucky (perhaps a borderline case), and now Arkansas. Though it would be false to depict the South as gun-crazed there is a palpable sense that gun ownership continues to be an integral part of the South's besieged rural white manhood.

Whether a white Arkansan US president is the man to confront these issues remains to be seen. In his first term he promoted the Brady Bill, which introduced mandatory checks on the criminal records of prospective gun purchasers, and he supported a ban on several types of assault rifles. More recently, he has encouraged voluntary efforts by the industry to sell safety devices with all new hand weapons.

However, Clinton has never tried or been able to treat the gun lobby the way that he has targeted the tobacco lobby. His administration has been markedly unafraid to cast cigarette makers as public enemies for marketing their products to children yet has not tried to draw parallels with the gun industry, partly because both Clinton and Al Gore want to avoid electorally controversial gun control legislation.

Whether this is good political judgment is open to doubt. In a country that has more guns than voters, political caution about guns is to some extent inevitable. Yet during the Brady Bill controversy in 1994, polls of gun owners showed majority support for stricter controls, while Americans as a whole were strongly in favour of the legislation. The real problem for Clinton was the gun lobby's political influence among most Republicans and some Democrats.

Alan Wolfe's detailed surveys of middle-class American opinions did not encompass gun control. But they did cover a whole range of other supposedly divisive and irreconcilable issues. The America that emerges is trying its best, conscientiously and practically, to apply principled but common-sense solutions to real-life modern problems. Wolfe's America is not a nation of zealots or maniacs. It is a nation of mostly hard-working, mostly virtuous, mostly realistic people who live in what is, mostly, a good society.

The words of one Jonesboro resident after the schoolyard shootings — "We're just enduring to the best of our ability" — were the true American middle-class vernacular. They were also, perhaps, a reminder that, even if tighter gun control fails to prevent the next Jonesboro massacre, it would still be a principled, practical and popular — yes, popular — response to America's unsolved internal arms proliferation crisis.

Washington Post, page 14

Single currency revealed as French superglue

Europe this week

Martin Walker

THE DECISION has been made. One-fifth of the wealth that the world produces each year, and one-fifth of the planet's trade, is to be gambled upon the political conviction that Europe should unite around a single currency. The European Commission and the European Monetary Institute last week produced their formal recommendations that 11 countries qualified for the first wave of the new single currency.

The formal name for this process is EMU, Economic and Monetary Union, and its real implications go far beyond switching francs and deutschmarks into the new euro. Monetary union is one thing, and brings evident, if modest, benefits in reducing exchange rate and trading costs. Economic union is something more profound, which explicitly includes a harmonisation of tax rates and broader fiscal policies that promises to be more rigid than the current system in the US.

It is now a commonplace to say that the single currency is essentially a political rather than an economic decision. It is "a concrete symbol of the common destiny we have freely chosen", as the Commission's formal report put it. The European élites who have tirelessly promoted the single currency have done a very good job of obscuring this purpose behind a dense cloud of economic disputation. They have stressed the way the coming of the euro has been the catalyst which required spendthrift central banks to impose rigorous financial discipline, and which drove governments to impose job-crushing squeezes while insisting that it was all in the good cause of Europe.

This column has explored before the various wheezes and fudges that European governments have concocted to meet the criteria to qualify for the single currency. None the less, the convergence of all 15 EU economies towards low inflation and low interest rates, towards balanced budgets and sustainable growth, has been hugely impressive.

There has been a triumph of the political will, driven devoutly forward by Germany's Helmut Kohl and France's Jacques Chirac. And we know why, thanks to the publication by the German weekly Der Spiegel of the texts of the Franco-German agreements of 1990. President Mitterrand, understandably alarmed at the prospect of German re-unification, offered Kohl a deal. He would drop his objections to German unity if — and only if — Kohl swore to abandon the deutschmark and lock the powerful new Germany into a European structure powerful enough to constrain it.

No wonder Kohl went on to declare that "European integration is in reality the question of war and peace in the 21st century". No wonder that Jacques Attali, Mitterrand's adviser, later acknowledged that "Maastricht was a long and complicated treaty with one real goal — to get rid of the D-mark".

Economic and monetary union should thus be seen as the most subtle and civilised means that Europeans have yet devised to solve the German question. Never quite powerful enough to conquer Europe, but always strong enough to be tempted to try, Germany has destabilised Europe for most of the past two centuries. The end of the cold war, and the consequent departure of those United States and Russian troops who subjected the fractious European tribes to adult supervision, required a new solution. The single currency is the means to bring about Thomas Mann's dream of a Europeanised Germany, rather than a Germanised Europe.

Kohl and Chirac celebrated the great euro-moment by heading to the court of the Mad Tsar for their first "troika" summit with Boris Yeltsin. This idea had been dreamt up, to Kohl's evident surprise and discomfiture, by Chirac and Yeltsin at last year's Council of Europe meeting. The two men have known each other since the 1980s, when Chirac was mayor of Paris and Yeltsin ran Moscow. The troika was pointedly designed by Chirac to exclude Britain, and take that bumptious Tony Blair down a peg or two. This may have been just as well.

Assuming, after Yeltsin sacked his entire government last week, that they were a pair of attendant lords fit to swell the scene for Yeltsin's re-staging of King Lear, Kohl and Chirac found themselves conscripted into Ozymandias-on-the-Volga. "Greater Europe, I would say, will in the future be the dominant power," Yeltsin declared. "I would say that in the whole world there is not a bigger organisation than Europe with Russia."

An appalled Kohl, who could probably hear his mobile phone already starting to ring with a call from Bill Clinton in Africa, quickly intervened to stress that the troika should not be seen as some new anti-US venture.

Germany has long been fated to sit uncomfortably on the fence, trying to be loyal to its US ally and to the Franco-German axis that Konrad Adenauer and General de Gaulle established nearly 40 years ago. The French do not make this easy. Nor, now, do the Russians.

There are gambles enough in the EMU venture without taking up Yeltsin's invitation to embark on new geo-political challenges. But note how familiar the old cold war contours start to loom. France is still suspicious of the Anglo-Saxons and flirts for special relations with Russia, while Germany tries to reassure everybody. And if the French remain semi-detached from the Atlantic alliance, Britain remains only semi-attached to Europe.

So far, so familiar. The difference is that Europe is no longer a prosperous and democratic version of the subservient old Warsaw Pact. Europe has now staked its future on a currency fit to match its ambitions and rich enough to rival the dollar. As the King Lear on the Volga discerned through the vodka haze, the post-cold war era of the lone US military and economic superpower has begun to draw to a close.

Death in the badlands

The Mexican government blames the atrocities in Chiapas on village feuds. But they may be the handiwork of a state-backed ghost army. **Ewen MacAskill** reports

THE hillside town of Tila lies in the heart of the Mexican badlands. It looks pretty from a distance, set among banana groves, dominated by a church painted a red and yellow pastel. But Tila is not a good place for foreigners, or Mexicans. The residents are unsmiling, harassment is frequent, a sense of menace constant. On the road there, a local issued a threat: "If you go up to Tila, they'll fuck you over."

The town is the stronghold of the biggest and most violent of the paramilitary groups in Mexico, called, with no sense of irony, Peace and Justice. Others operating in the region include the Degolladores (the Beheaders), the Red Mask and the Chinchulines (the Parasites).

They collectively form a ghost army, their very existence denied by a Mexican government sensitive to international opinion. But human rights and church groups tell a different story. Files record the testimonies of thousands of victims of rape and kidnap, intimidation and extortion, murder and mayhem in the state of Chiapas, home to the Maya.

The paramilitaries are central to the Mexican government's strategy for defeating the Zapatistas, the guerrilla movement championing indigenous rights and led by the world's first Internet guerrilla leader, Subcomandante Marcos. Since 1995 there has been a stand-off between the Mexican army and the Zapatistas. Unable to confront them directly, the army has fought the war by proxy through the paramilitaries.

In the town of San Cristóbal the markets sell Marcos T-shirts, stickers proclaiming "I Love Marcos", and Che Guevara posters. The town attracts Vietnam vets, Basques and idealistic young Americans on "political reality tours" organised by the radical group Global Exchange.

In San Cristóbal revolution can be fun. In the villages a few hours' drive away, isolated and vulnerable, the reality is harsh and ugly, caught in the crossfire between the paramilitaries and the Zapatistas.

According to government figures, at least 11,000 people have fled their homes. At a temporary camp for the displaced, north of San Cristóbal, one of the victims, Maria, points over the valley to the spot where her brother was shot dead in September. She recalled how the paramilitaries had attempted to force him to join up but he had refused. They boasted to her after the killing: "The next time you see your brother he will be in a lovely box."

In nearby Acteal, 45 people, including 36 women and children, were massacred by paramilitaries on December 22. They were trapped in a gully as paramilitaries fired from above and below.

Acteal received a lot of press attention, but the most dangerous area is around Tila, in the Zona Norte, where the murders are frequent, more than 200 in the last three years. A human rights worker described Zona Norte as "Acteal in slow motion".

The residents of Tila are reluctant to discuss Peace and Justice. But the word goes out and the organisation's chubby president, Marcos Albino Torres Lopez, turns up, smiling, insisting Peace and Justice is an agriculture development agency: "You may have heard that Peace and Justice is violent. I want people to know that it is not. My message is against violence."

He claimed his background was in agriculture and produced three small leaflets giving advice on organic compost, which he said were distributed to members. But he delivered his denials of violence with a stare that would have had Catholics asking for the last rites.

Father Heriberto Cruz Vera, who lives in a state of siege in Tila and has survived several assassination attempts, laughed at the suggestion that Torres was non-violent: "That would be a conversion!" He noted that Torres had failed to mention he was ex-military.

In Mexico City the official government line is that violence has long been part of life in Chiapas and many of the deaths have nothing to do with politics but long-standing rivalries between villages, land disputes and religious divides. Such tensions did exist. But human rights workers claim the government and army deliberately exacerbate them as part of a divide-and-rule policy to contain the Zapatistas.

The evidence of collusion between the paramilitaries and the government is powerful. Villagers frequently report paramilitaries being ferried around in army and police trucks. Evidence includes a letter from government supporters in Tila requesting arms, uniforms and communications equipment. A copy of a $450,000 cheque from the government to Peace and Justice was also obtained: a lot of money for leaflets on organic compost.

At an army checkpoint in Chiapas last week, Marina Ramirez Jiminez, the director of the church-sponsored Fray Bartolome human rights centre, was asked for her name. She refused to give it, reminding the soldier that in Guatemala the army had passed on the names to the death squads. The soldier proudly replied: "We are not like the Guatemalan army." She replied: "Yes, you are. You support the paramilitaries, the assassins." The soldier did not reply and walked away.

Villahermosa
Tila
MEXICO
San Cristóbal de las Casas
CHIAPAS
GUATEMALA
80km

PM 'helped Murdoch' in Italian media bid

Michael White

TONY Blair's relationship with Rupert Murdoch was again under scrutiny last week after claims in the Italian media that the Prime Minister had intervened with Romano Prodi, his centre-left counterpart in Rome, to help Mr Murdoch's BSkyB bid for the Berlusconi media empire, Mediaset.

Without citing sources, La Stampa's stock market specialist, Ugo Bertone, described Mr Blair as "Murdoch's sponsor" in the deal.

Three years ago Mr Murdoch failed to buy a controlling interest in Mediaset, which would have given him up to 50 per cent of Italian TV advertising revenue and relieved Mr Berlusconi of the "conflict of interest" which dogged his brief premiership. A renewed Murdoch courtship ended last month when Mr Berlusconi said that family pressures — "heart reasons" — had prevailed. The fate of Mr Berlusconi's media holdings is an intensely political issue in Italy. The leader of the rightwing opposition still has a 50.6 per cent interest in the company that runs all three of Italy's biggest commercial channels.

Mr Blair has invested much diplomatic time and skill in courting Mr Murdoch, who owns the Sun and News of the World, plus Times Newspapers' two broadsheets. But Mr Blair's staff repeatedly told inquirers that "if asked, the Prime Minister would speak up for British firms. It would be odd if he did not."

Although BSkyB is a British company, its biggest shareholder is Mr Murdoch's Australian vehicle, News Corporation, and Mr Murdoch is a naturalised United States citizen.

Then, on Friday of last week, to the astonishment of MPs on both sides of the Commons, the media magnate confirmed that he had used information obtained through a telephone conversation that Mr Blair had with Mr Prodi to decide that it would not be worth the political trouble involved in pursuing his takeover plans.

This prompted Tim Collins, a Tory MP, to demand a Commons statement from Mr Blair. "As over Bernie Ecclestone [the Formula One boss], if you do Labour a favour the Government will do a favour for you," said Mr Collins.

Mr Murdoch revealed that Mr Blair had called him back two days after he had asked about Italian political reaction to his BSkyB bid for Mediaset.

Informed sources said that the crucial exchange amounted to little more than a simple question from Mr Blair, in which the Prime Minister said, in effect, "This Murdoch-Berlusconi thing, what about it?" Mr Prodi replied, "We'd rather have an Italian firm" take over Mediaset.

The prospect of Mr Murdoch moving into non-English European media has encouraged Blair's strategists to hope that it may soften his opposition to Britain joining the European single currency. It is the key issue on which the Sun switched from Tory to Labour before the election.

— 1089 · 23 · 3 · 98 — ©Steve Bell 1998 —

Labour plays safe on welfare

David Brindle and Michael White

MINISTERS this week start work on filling yawning gaps in their plans to modernise the welfare state, after the long-awaited green paper on welfare reform last week emerged long on strategy but short on specifics.

Although it had been made known in advance that the discussion document would not be detailed, it was all too apparent that some of the toughest issues facing the Government have yet to be addressed.

The green paper, New Ambitions For Our Country: A New Contract For Welfare, sets out a framework for recasting the welfare state, largely unchanged for 50 years, on the principle of "work for those who can, security for those who cannot".

It lays down principles for reform and lists measures by which to gauge change over the next 10 to 20 years. However, the document leaves to further reviews many of the biggest questions: Will everybody be forced to pay into a second pension? How is the spiralling of the £12 billion housing benefit bill to be curbed? To what extent will people be responsible for their care costs in old age? How is the principle of child maintenance to be rehabilitated after the initial shambles of the Child Support Agency?

Opposition critics also charged that there was little sign of the radical ideas espoused previously by Frank Field, minister for welfare reform and the document's principal author, who had supposedly been told by Tony Blair to "think the unthinkable" on reform.

Iain Duncan Smith, the Conservative shadow social security secretary, branded the outcome a damp squib. He claimed Mr Field had lost a Whitehall turf battle with Gordon Brown — leaving his green paper a vacuous "series of missed opportunities" as the Chancellor closed down or pre-empted his more ambitious options.

The Liberal Democrats echoed the complaint, suggesting that the conclusions of 10 months' work were "strong on words and worthy targets, but weak on action to tackle the causes of poverty and unemployment".

However, all the signs were that the Government had deliberately erred on the side of caution. After the experience of last autumn's backbench revolt over cuts in lone-parent benefits, the emphasis is on slow development of ideas and keeping interest groups on board.

This approach was clear in respect of disability benefits, one of the few areas where the green paper was specific. Although ministers plan much tougher eligibility tests for the main sickness and disability benefits, which together cost £24 billion a year, they have dropped unpopular proposals to step up means-testing or convert some of the cash allowances into rationed care services.

But the pensioners' lobby was alarmed at the green paper's lack of detail on pensions. Sally Greengross, director general of Age Concern, said: "Frank Field has said pensioners need a decent income in retirement, but he still has not said what it should be, or how it will be achieved."

The green paper also stressed the need to tackle benefit fraud. One target of a benefit crackdown would be an estimated 20 million surplus national insurance numbers over and above the number justified by the size of the workforce.

A report by the Commons public accounts committee, published the day before the green paper, revealed that 99 per cent of suspected housing benefit fraudsters are getting away "scot free" in fiddling £905 million of taxpayers' cash every year.

Short wins territorial battle

A POLITICAL tug of war over responsibility for Britain's 13 remaining colonies has ended in victory for the International Development Secretary, Clare Short, *writes Lucy Ward.*

Ms Short's department has fended off a move by the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, to remove the dependencies from its control and place them under a new department headed by Foreign Office minister Baroness Symons. Ms Short was said to have "gone ballistic" in February after Mr Cook unilaterally outlined the proposed arrangements in a speech to the chief ministers of the remaining dependencies, whose total population is 186,000.

Under his plan, they would have become the responsibility of a new UK overseas territories ministry, which would have become accountable to Parliament for the £50 million spent annually on the dependencies. Under a compromise largely in line with the arrangement sought by Ms Short, the dependencies will remain the joint responsibility of the Department of International Development and the Foreign Office.

Blair's bon mots prove a palpable hit in Paris

SKETCH
Simon Hoggart

THE Prime Minister walked informally up the path to the French national assembly last week. A military band, clearly unbriefed in the nuances of Cool Britannia, played "Land of Hope and Glory". In Mr Blair's new "real entente" they will be replaced by the rock band Verve.

His arrival had been big news in Paris, and scuffles broke out between the local press and British photographers jostling for position. It must be very strange, wherever you go in public, to find your route lined by men hitting each other.

"You are in Paris ici, not in Zimbabwe!" said one French reporter. "Azz'ole! Azz'ole!"

We trooped into the Chamber. This is a magnificent confection of gold and tapestries and murals and bas-reliefs and statues and enough marble to denude every quarry in Italy — in short, it would make a perfect potting shed for Lord Irvine.

The room is as vertiginous as an opera house. The President, or Speaker, M Fabius, sat on a throne about halfway up towards the dome. Mr Blair sat below him, gazing nervously up like a Victorian schoolboy in front of the dominie.

Finally M Fabius finished speaking and Mr Blair mounted to the lectern. We wondered whether he would use his famous verbal twiddles, saying "I mean, voyez!" but apart from one "alors" he spoke with a clarity and directness he seems to find difficult at home.

French politicians do not go in for jokes, any more than British ministers wave pigs' bladders. So the jokes were welcome. He invoked Winston Churchill, who spoke French like a walrus with a speech impediment, perhaps deliberately.

"Je vais vous parler en français," said Mr Blair, "Courage!" They laughed and applauded, and quite right, too — his French is 10 times better than any previous British leader.

Then he described how, as a young man, he had worked in a Paris bar. Jacques Chirac had been the prime minister then. "He has also made progress — though a little less than me." They loved that too.

Then he said that in the bar it was a strict rule that all tips were put into a common pot. After a while he had realised he was the only waiter actually doing this. "It was my first lesson in applied socialism."

The right suddenly realised that this was possibly the funniest thing they had ever heard in their lives. By the time he predicted the final of the World Cup ("Angleterre contre Ecosse") they were cheering and whooping like Texans at a barbecue.

From then on in it was competitive clapping between the two sides. When he got to the passage attacking dogma, and said that what counted was not whether an economy was right or left, but whether it worked, the right's cheers were aimed straight at the left. "A gauchiste? Huh, he's one of ours!" they were saying.

Then he got on to the Social Exclusion Unit, and the left decided they could join in. Next we were back on the spirit of small business enterprise, and the right had nudged ahead. But then — who was joining him in a new small business collaboration, but that old leftie, Lionel Jospin. "Bravo!" someone shouted.

(This was notable because it is widely believed that M Jospin does not like Tony Blair. In particular he, a former economics professor, does not like being lectured by someone he regards as little better than a student.)

We must recognise the unions, and the left was in the lead. We must be "flexible" (which in French means sack lots of workers), or "adaptable" as he put it, and the right was back on track.

He ended almost in a hush. "Voilà, mes amis, merci beaucoup," and they rose for a standing ovation.

I think he ought to speak in French all the time. The voters would get used to it; they never listen to the words anyway, and it sounds so much better.

Le Monde, page 17

Army link to Ulster killings

John Mullin

SINN FEIN last weekend demanded a judicial inquiry into one of the murkiest controversies of the Troubles as fresh evidence emerged of army collusion with loyalist paramilitaries in the assassination of suspected IRA terrorists.

The nationalist SDLP called for further investigation after the publication of details from classified security force files indicating that the army agent Brian Nelson was involved in 15 murders, 15 attempted murders and 62 conspiracies to murder.

One Sinn Fein source said: "This is bigger now than Bloody Sunday. That was one incident, however horrific. This is a conspiracy over several years involving the political and military establishment. It is much more dangerous for the British administration."

Mr Nelson alone was charged with offences arising from the affair, after consultation with Sir Patrick Mayhew, the then Attorney General. He was persuaded to plead guilty to five charges of conspiracy to murder, and there was no trial. He was jailed for 10 years and now lives in England.

Military intelligence officers said the operation was intended to save lives, and they had passed to Special Branch the names of 217 people under threat. But an inquiry was able to establish that only two lives — one of them Gerry Adams's — were saved as a result.

Mr Adams, Sinn Fein's president, said that Sir Patrick's involvement in a deal in which the murder charges were dropped raised questions about the involvement of the Thatcher and Major governments in an "illegal and murderous" strategy.

Successive governments have denied claims that military intelligence was involved in murdering IRA members. The army said that the "serious" allegations were thoroughly investigated. No charges were brought against its personnel.

The allegations came only days after George Mitchell, the Northern Ireland peace talks chairman, attempted to slice through doubt, division and pessimism by setting April 9 as the deadline for agreement.

Mr Mitchell said that the parties will eat, sleep and negotiate five days a week at Stormont until the emergence of a deal which could end centuries of conflict. "The time for discussion is over. It's now time for decision," he said.

Foot-dragging Unionists and nationalists who expected the informal April 9 deadline to be extended had a fire put under them by Senator Mitchell's bullish announcement.

"The participants have been negotiating for nearly two years. The participants know what needs to be done. It's now time to do it," he said.

"It could be discussed for another two years or 20 years. But there has to be a decision and the only way to bring this to conclusion is to require a decision to be made."

Ronnie Flanagan, the RUC Chief Constable, added fresh impetus by absolving the IRA leadership from recent violence, which threatened to cause the expulsion of Sinn Fein from the talks.

He cleared the Provisional IRA of involvement in recent bombings and blamed two anti-peace process splinter groups.

The Chief Constable pointed the finger at Continuity IRA and an unnamed group of dissidents who defected from the IRA last year, joining the organisation's former quartermaster. Both groups were blamed for recent attacks.

IRA members were involved in February's killing of a Catholic man and had offered bomb-making expertise, but without the sanction of the IRA leadership, he said.

Had he said otherwise, Unionists would have accused the Northern Ireland Secretary, Mo Mowlam, of turning a blind eye for the sake of keeping Sinn Fein in the talks.

In Brief

FOETUSES can hear and remember sounds in the womb at 20 weeks after conception, according to research which ignited a row between the pro- and anti-abortion lobbies.

THE inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence, who was stabbed to death in a racist attack by white youths in south-east London in 1993, reopened after the family withdrew allegations that the chairman, Sir William Macpherson, was racially insensitive.

BRITAIN has signalled a tough new policy on foreign Islamic militants by refusing to allow a group of Egyptians allegedly linked to terrorism to attend a conference in London.

MARY ALLEN, chief executive of the Royal Opera House, has resigned after months of pressure and speculation.

NEW FIGURES show the female population of prisons in England and Wales, standing at 3,053, to be at its highest level since 1905.

THE Christian Brothers, who have taught an estimated half a million boys in the past 40 years in both Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, issued an unprecedented apology to hundreds of young men sexually and physically abused at its schools and orphanages.

JAMES FERMAN, veteran director of the British Board of Film Classification and target of much of the opprobrium of pro-censorship groups, has quit after 23 years in the post.

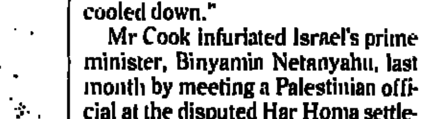
A PLANE carrying the Leeds United football team home after their game against West Ham crash-landed at Stansted airport in Essex after an engine burst into flames during take-off. No one was seriously hurt.

THE Government has added the basking shark to the list of species with safeguards under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act. Bluebells, scores of other native plants, water voles and the freshwater pearl mussel, have been also added to the list.

EVERY four-year-old will have access to a a free place in either a nursery, playgroup or school by the start of the academic year in September, the Government announced.

GARY GLITTER, the glam rock star, aged 53, has been charged with 50 offences of child pornography.

JOAN LESTOR, the impassioned politician who symbolised Labour idealism for a generation, has died at the age of 66. Obituary, page 24



Just here for the crate of beer

SHE had already been to the Cross Hands in Old Sudbury before dropping in at the Rover's Return, and then it was on to the Bridge Inn at Topsham, Devon, *writes Geoffrey Gibbs.*

To be fair, three visits by the Queen to licensed premises in 71 years hardly amounts to a pub crawl, though this was her first official visit to an inn.

Her lack of relevant experience was horribly exposed. For one thing, the monarch did not order chicken in the basket at the 16th century hostelry; she did not play a game of darts; worst of all, she did not order a drink.

But the Queen did get one piece of etiquette right when she accepted a carry-out for her husband: a 12-bottle case of limited edition beer, brewed to mark the pub's 101 years in the same family.

PHOTOGRAPH: SAMANTHA PRITCHARD

British Jews snub Cook

Madeleine Bunting and Ian Black

BRITAIN'S Jewish community has snubbed the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, and withdrawn an invitation for him to be guest of honour at an annual fund-raising dinner.

The Board of Jewish Deputies had asked Mr Cook to address their annual president's dinner in May, but before he replied, the invitation was withdrawn and the dinner postponed until the end of the year.

Senior members of the board have admitted that they are concerned that Jewish feeling against the Foreign Secretary is running so high that there could be a boycott of the dinner — the board's biggest fund-raising event.

Eldred Tabachnik, the president, said: "Considering the strength of feeling in the community, we did not think we should have him at our dinner. Hopefully, we will be able to ask him later, when things have cooled down."

Mr Cook infuriated Israel's prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, last month by meeting a Palestinian official at the disputed Har Homa settlement on occupied Arab territory in East Jerusalem.

But the Foreign Secretary was backed by Tony Blair and remains unrepentant, insisting he wanted to underline British and EU opposition to Jewish settlement in occupied territory and to repair some of the damage done to Britain by its support for the United States over Iraq.

A spokesman insisted the cancelled dinner was not a snub and was due to other diplomats being unable to attend. But he added: "There is widespread disquiet over a perceived bias in the European Union, and in Britain, against Israel in the Middle East peace process, after Mr Cook's visit to Har Homa."

Meanwhile Mr Blair is to make an unprecedented gesture of British support for an independent Palestinian state by staying overnight in Gaza this month to balance an overnight stay in Israel. He will be the first national leader to do so.

● Whitehall is hoarding nearly £2 million worth of assets seized from victims of the Nazis. Figures hidden in government accounts contradict the impression given by ministers that none of the assets in Britain — taken from individuals in Nazi-occupied countries — remained.

Comment, page 12

Racist teams face ban

John Duncan

RACIST teams will be banned from council soccer pitches under proposals presented to the Sports Minister, Tony Banks, by the Football Task Force this week.

The report, one of a series commissioned by the Government last July, found disturbing evidence that while racism at professional levels has diminished, the problem remains deep rooted at local level.

The Football Task Force has heard evidence from supporters, players, administrators and officials since it was set up under the chairmanship of David Mellor in July 1997 and will produce reports on topics including commercialism, disabled access, ticketing and merchandising.

"The threat of racism is a powerful deterrent to black and Asian people and particularly young people playing organised football," the report says. "It can have a detrimental effect on a player's performance and persuade some to give up the game altogether."

"The report has come at the right time," said Wimbledon footballer Robbie Earle. "Racism is still a serious problem and there is no place for it in the modern game. A lot of time and effort has gone into this far-reaching report which hopefully will set the standards for players and supporters."

● Football and rugby league authorities launched inquiries into a weekend of spectator violence in which one fan died and three referees were threatened with assault by fans. The worst incident came at Gillingham, Kent, where Fulham fan Matthew Fox, aged 24, was killed in a fight outside the ground.

Comment, page 12

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Prescott promises London a mayor by 2000

Ewen MacAskill

THE Government last week unveiled its plan for an authority to replace the Greater London Council abolished by Baroness Thatcher 12 years ago.

The Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, described the plan as offering a radical institution "to give London the means to solve its problems and maximise its potential". London will for the first time have a directly-elected mayor, as do some other major cities around the world.

Former GLC chairman and left-wing Labour MP Ken Livingstone threw his hat into the ring last week. Broadcaster Trevor Phillips and transport minister Glenda Jackson may be enlisted by the Labour leadership to stop him. The bookies' favourite, Lord Archer, may be challenged by former Hong Kong governor Chris Patten and ex-transport minister Steven Norris from the Tory ranks.

The Labour leadership is openly hostile to the idea a leftwinger like Mr Livingstone in charge of the capital. In return, he remains critical of the Government's plans. Mr Livingstone's concern is that a directly-elected mayor will not be sufficiently accountable without a strong assembly. He also wants the new body to have direct tax-raising powers.

The intention is to have the new mayor in place by 2000, provided London voters back the idea in a referendum on May 7, the same day as local elections. In addition to a mayor, there will be an assembly of 25 members.

The authority will have responsibility for a new Metropolitan police authority and a new fire and emergency authority, as well as for London's transport, environment, tourism, culture and sport. The mayor and the assembly will formulate a strategic overview for the capital, and will have a budget of £3.3 billion a year to work with.

In general the mayor will propose and the assembly will scrutinise; a simple majority in the assembly will be sufficient to amend the mayor's annual budget. London's borough councils will continue with their many functions.

A new London development agency will implement the mayor's economic and regeneration strategy, with powers to attract investment, create jobs and tackle rundown areas. The aim is eventually to have such regional agencies throughout England.

The mayor will be elected by a supplementary vote system. Voters indicate a first and a second choice; if no one wins outright with 50 per cent, all the candidates except the top two are eliminated, and the second preferences are transferred to the remaining two, hopefully producing a clear winner.

A form of proportional representation, the additional member system, will be used to elect the assembly. Fourteen boroughs will elect members on the first-past-the-post system, to be topped up with a further 11 members selected in proportion to parties' share of the overall vote. The election would be either in autumn next year or spring 2000.

The cost of setting up the Greater London Authority would be £20 million. The running cost is also estimated at £20 million a year, the equivalent of 3p a week on an average family's council tax bill.

Francisco killer named

Jamie Wilson

A MAN named by a High Court judge in a landmark ruling last week as the murderer of a brilliant gynaecologist could still escape a criminal trial unless new evidence is uncovered.

In a unique hearing, the family of Joan Francisco won their case for damages against Tony Diedrick, the former boyfriend they say killed her, even though he has never been prosecuted in a criminal court.

But Mr Justice Alliott based his judgment on the civil rather than criminal standard of proof that requires the case to be proved only on the balance of probabilities rather than beyond reasonable doubt.

Last week the Metropolitan police, who arrested Diedrick in March 1995 but released him without charge on the grounds that there was insufficient evidence, said no decision had been taken on whether to submit a new report to the Crown Prosecution Service.

The family's solicitor, Taz Rara, warned they would seek a judicial review in the High Court if criminal charges were not brought against Diedrick.

Mr Justice Alliott said: "This is a dreadful judgment to have to pass on any man and not one which I have come to without the most anxious consideration. I find the assault and battery alleged, in effect the murder, to have been proved."

Dr Francisco, aged 27, was strangled at her flat in north London on December 26, 1994. Her family have always alleged the killer was Diedrick, who stalked the gynaecologist for months before her death.

The family will now pursue their damages claim, limited to £50,000, against Diedrick, at the High Court.

Government dampens anthrax scare

Richard Norton-Taylor and Ian Black

THE Government last week was forced into an embarrassing retreat from its official warning, endorsed by Tony Blair, that Iraqi agents were plotting to smuggle chemical and biological weapons into Britain.

The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, insisted there was "no specific threat" to Britain, "no evidence to indicate that any attempt has been made to smuggle anthrax into this country", or that such an attempt "might be in prospect", he told the House of Commons.

His attempt to allay fears, provoked by publication of an all-ports alert to Customs, police Special Branch and Ministry of Defence officers, was in stark contrast to previous remarks by Mr Blair.

The Prime Minister had said information which prompted the alert showed the need for Britain to remain "eternally vigilant" with Saddam Hussein.

Mr Blair has taken a particularly bellicose line against the Iraqi dictator, notably during the crisis over UN weapons inspectors, which was expected to lead to military action.

Embarrassed officials insisted that the warning — which surfaced in the Sun newspaper — was not a new anti-Iraqi propaganda initiative but an apparently random leak of an internal security memo.

Whitehall sources said the memo was outdated and probably originated in the period about six weeks ago when US and British air strikes against Iraq were looking likely because of the failure to resolve the stand-off over UN weapons inspections. There was no information to suggest Iraq was contemplating a terrorist campaign against Western targets, the sources said.

The reports came in the wake of a government propaganda campaign unprecedented since the end of the cold war. Official briefings and leaks from Whitehall about the Iraqi regime increased as the crisis over UN weapons inspectors escalated in February with the prospect of military action getting closer and the Government sensing a lack of popular support for bombing.



High and mighty . . . A campaigner for cannabis law reform takes in the scene in London's Trafalgar Square, where 11,000 people gathered at a pro-legalisation rally last weekend PHOTO: ANDREW TESTA

Legal threat to Hague's Tory reforms

Michael White

WILLIAM HAGUE'S new Conservative party constitution is vulnerable to legal challenge once his Fresh Future reforms begin to bite on grassroot activists, the Tory leadership was warned last weekend.

When 1,500 supporters met for their spring council in Harrogate, Mr Hague won overwhelming endorsement for his declared determination to unite his party behind tough, Thatcherish leadership.

"That is what I am paid to do, what I was elected to do. I am going to lead," he told them, after pledging a startlingly ambitious goal of doubling the 300,000-strong party membership in two years, with half the targeted new members younger than himself.

The 37-year-old leader won applause for his invocation of One Nation Toryism to bind up the wounds after their election massacre — despite his refusal to abandon one of the most divisive policy issues, his "not for 10 years" policy on the European single currency. Mr Hague wants to get away from narrow economic issues.

He contrasted his party's return to first principles in the wake of defeat with New Labour's "suppression" of its own and said Labour was now led "by men who lack even the courage of other people's convictions".

But a shadow was left over Mr Hague's restructuring. Warnings were given by veteran "pro-democracy" Tory activists that the new constitution would not only prove authoritarian in practice, but open to legal attack by future dissidents.

After a debate, rebels in the Charter Movement and the Conservative Democratic Movement won 25 per cent of the vote in Harrogate for an amendment which would have postponed formal abolition of the 130-year-old Conservative National Union until their annual conference in October. Crucially, it would also have allowed more time to debate the implications of the new constitution.

In a ballot of 300,000 party members, the Harrogate session heard that 110,165 voted for Mr Hague's reform package, including a summary of the new constitution and a mass franchise for picking future leaders. Just 4,425 members voted against.

Mr Hague called it a victory for "the most radical reforms in our party's history". But critics like Eric Chalker and Michael Normington argued that the constitution would prove to be a top-down system, "a mixture of Blairism and Asda" — a reference to Archie Norman, MP, the Asda supermarket chief turned key Hague aide. Like Tony Blair, Mr Hague was appealing over the heads of party activists to ordinary members, they told the activists, and gaining more power for himself.

The critics, who conceded they had been given a fair hearing, also said that, on such a low turnout, a future legal action would stand a high chance of persuading a judge that the 79-page constitution had never been properly authorised.

Labour's plans to have political parties registered with an electoral commission, as part of its drive against sleaze, could also add to Tory problems.

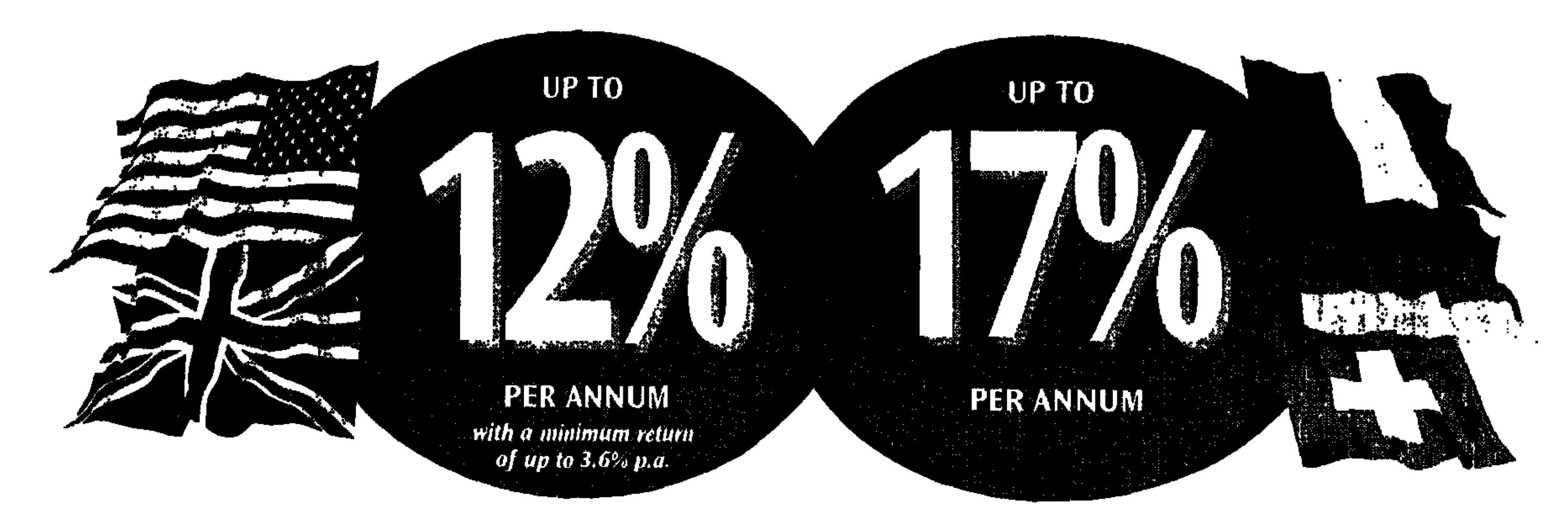
Anger at jail boss's gaffe

THE director general of the prison service faced calls for his resignation last week after he claimed physiological differences meant black people were more likely to suffocate when restrained by warders than those who were white, *writes Sarah Hall.*

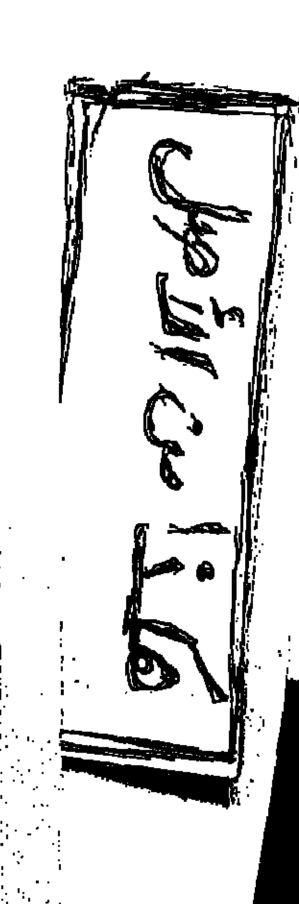
Richard Tilt's comments came after an inquest ruled that Alton Manning, aged 33 — the third black man to die in prison while under restraint between October and December 1995 — was unlawfully killed at the privately-run Blackenhurst jail, in December 1995, after being put in a neck hold in contravention of prison service regulations. Seven warders were suspended after last week's verdict.

Following the verdict Mr Tilt told BBC television that six of the seven people who had died in prisons while being restrained since 1992 were black, with the seventh being of mixed race. That had prompted prison service research which had shown that "Afro-Caribbean people are more likely to suffer positional asphyxia than whites."

Later Mr Tilt said: "I am extremely sorry if my remarks caused any offence . . . It is clearly a very complex area."







Israel in need of frank friends

THERE was room at the inn in Gaza last week for the United Nations secretary-general, Kofi Annan. And this month the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, will also spend a night enjoying Yasser Arafat's hospitality after visiting Israel. Bedding down in Palestinian territory should not be an issue: a visit is the same whether by night or day. But no national leader has done it before, and it symbolises an effort to maintain a balanced attitude towards Israel and the Palestinians which the administration of Binyamin Netanyahu finds so hard to accept.

It took two sides to reach the Oslo agreement five years ago, and by and large the outside world recognised to an equal degree the efforts made by the Israelis and by the Palestinians. What has hardened since then is not the attitude of the international community but the position of the Israeli government. This is as obvious as it is sad, and it is as much so for most friends of Israel as for those who are more sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. Both communities have suffered visibly as a consequence: the Palestinians have suffered from economic isolation and a poverty which has worsened rather than ameliorated. The Israelis have suffered from terrorist attacks and the fears that they arouse. But Israelis and Palestinians alike have been wounded more deeply as optimism shifts to pessimism, and as a fragile goodwill is poisoned at its source.

This is the context in which Mr Annan felt obliged to deliver what he called "the most difficult message" of his visit. Part of his message was an acknowledgement — which no previous secretary-general could have made — that Israel has been the target historically of one-sided condemnation in the UN. But the core of Mr Annan's remarks was this: the great mass of world opinion, including many countries sympathetic to Israel, genuinely believes that Israel is responsible, directly or indirectly, "for provocative acts that undermine goodwill and spark hostilities". It believes that Israel has disobeyed the UN Security Council and dodged the Oslo agreements — and that in doing so it does a great disservice to its own cause.

Is it wise or helpful to speak bluntly in this way — however true the message may be? One strong argument in favour of doing so is simply that it gives at least a wisp of encouragement to the Palestinians. This is not a matter of sentiment: if their community loses hope altogether, then a significant section of it will turn or return to violence. Responsible members of Mr Arafat's team are privately amazed, and relieved, that it has not happened yet. As for Mr Netanyahu, private appeals to him and soft persuasion from the one country with indisputable leverage — the United States — have failed to avert what Mr Annan called a "crisis of confidence". Those interlocutors with less direct power (but who are listened to closely in Washington) may play a more useful role by speaking out loud.

Mr Netanyahu is apparently now seeking to preempt the much-talked of US proposal for the next stage of Israeli withdrawal — 13.1 per cent of West Bank territory — by his own counter-proposal. Both plans will deliver far less than was promised and fail to provide for a further stage of withdrawal. But the issue is overshadowed by a more fundamental question: does the "road map" set out in the Oslo agreement still mean anything? If the answer is no, then that is very bad news for both sides. There will be little to celebrate this month on the 50th anniversary of Israeli independence if there is no way forward in sight. Mr Annan has delivered the advice that should be expected of a critical friend: Mr Blair is signalling his intention to do the same. In a crisis, there is an extra value in speaking frankly.

Jewish assets must be repaid

THIS week British ministers were expected to attempt to heal a wound that has hurt for more than 50 years. The Government was due to issue a report on the vexed business of "ex-enemy property" — the assets of refugees from Nazism, most of them Jews, who regarded Britain as a safe place to put their money. Except that their money was not safe. First it was frozen, along with "enemy assets", by the UK Treasury. Then much of it was handed over to British companies to compensate them for the losses they had incurred abroad, whether by Nazi occupation or communist takeover. In other words, Jews who had lost everything could not even claim the money that was theirs: instead they were made to pay for the sins of their persecutors.

Later this week the Department of Trade and Industry is expected to announce the Government's proposals to make amends — not just for the diversion of assets, but also for the post-war rules which made it near impossible for Holocaust victims to reclaim their savings. Records show the unclaimed cash could run into the hundreds of millions of dollars in today's money.

The likeliest plan is a compensation fund of about $3.3 million to repay the survivors of Nazism. If this is what the Government suggests, it will be a grave disappointment. For one thing, the sum of money is paltry — a fraction of the estimated £60 million deposited in Britain at 1945 prices. For another, Jewish groups say they are not interested in "compensation", a "hardship fund" or a "gesture". Such a move would miss the point: these claimants are not a charity case — the money belongs to them.

More deeply, if the Government takes this route it will be dodging what, in some ways, is the key purpose of the exercise: facing up to the conduct of its predecessors two generations ago. It is this reckoning with the past that activists say they want most. Of course the pressures of war and post-war reconstruction meant ethical corners had to be cut: but now, 50 years on, it is surely time for every nation to recognise and admit what they did. Britain's record is better than most: we fought the Nazis to defeat and we took in a modest number of Jewish refugees. But now Britain risks being alone in refusing to address its past; even the Swiss took steps to make amends last week. If London were to follow the lead set by Washington — which is said to be establishing a 20-person commission on the linked questions of wartime assets, gold and art treasures — it would help that immediate process and a graver one, too: the reckoning with the darkest period in the century's history.

A red card to football racism

RACISM, as this week's well argued report from the Football Task Force notes, is not of football's making. It is society's problem, but the report sets out powerful reasons why Britain's national game should be more rigorous in facing the challenge of racism. Football's capacity to unite people surpasses all other sports in Britain, but so does its power to divide. It has become so intrinsic to national life that the people who feel unable to take part as supporters or players feel an even greater sense of exclusion. Yet even though black footballers now account for 15 per cent of professional players, the proportion of black and Asian spectators attending Premier League games is a mere 1 per cent. Worse still, the number of black supporters is actually dropping. In a passage which should be placed in every club room, the task force concludes: "For a game often accused of taking more than it gives, the value of work by football to 'put something back into society' cannot be overstated."

The problem has much deeper roots than the Premiership. The report notes the absence of a single Asian professional footballer at this top level — or even one black face on the 92-member Football Association council — but "kicking racism out of football" has to embrace the entire sport. Progress is already being made towards eliminating racism from the professional game, but it is still rampant in junior sections on local parks — so rampant that Asian footballers have set up their own leagues.

The reform package begins at the bottom — with a call on local authorities to exclude local clubs with a record of racist incidents from council-owned fields — and goes right up to the top with detailed recommendations on stewards' training, the introduction of anti-racist pledges in all contracts, and an instruction to referees for an immediate red card for any racist comments on the field of play.

Will it succeed? There are sound reasons why it is in the self-interest of clubs to react equally positively. Widening the pool of players would raise standards, while increasing public support would fill an another gaping hole: urgently needed extra cash.

Little Rock seems closer than Calais

Peter Preston

PLUCK one damned thing after another from the events of the last week and ask yourself the questions that the English (especially) never ask. What kind of country are we living in? We have a Minister of Culture. What culture? We believe that there is such a thing as society. What society?

Take a single week of damned things. The Oscars begin it, and are universally reported with gushy reverence. America's Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences — grey, anonymous, calculating — is yet again the ultimate arbiter of our cinematic fate. Four Britons are nominated for the best actress award, but are left with only a sporting smile and a rush of cleavage to keep them warm. The sole British Oscar-winner, the music-maker from The Full Monty, is suddenly a national heroine.

Bill Clinton, pavilioned in weighty editorials, discovers Africa, and lands in one former British colony (Ghana) before heading for another (Botswana). He gets red carpetings beyond the Queen's imaginings. Meanwhile the Ulster peace "process" isn't proceeding. Senator George Mitchell, the master of the non-revels, looks glum. Plans for a London mayoralty inspired by Rough Rudy, the mayor of New York, are duly unveiled.

Then we switch on the BBC news. Two little boys have shot four little girls and their teacher in a school playground. The British Broadcasting Corporation leads its bulletins on the horror throughout the day, the British press hacks down a few more forests. Where was this playground? Acton, Accrington, Aberdeen? No: Arkansas.

Golly, things have to get cheerier after that. They do. The stars of Friends are in London to make an episode. Matt and Matthew go to a Soho nightclub where a blonde lap dancer called Lee thinks they liked her: "I could feel Matt watching me. He seemed mesmerised."

Meanwhile, a few miles across town, the Times ceremonially dumps Tony Blair in the mire. Yip, he did go running to the Italian prime minister over Rupert Murdoch's bid for the Berlusconi empire. Alastair Campbell may be obfuscating away, but the Murdoch men in America have lost their coyness. Ouch! Better concentrate, perhaps, on Frank Field's "Welfare to Work", in the footsteps of Bill and Hillary.

And the ironies continue. This tapestry unfolds in the week that 11 of our European partners sign up for EMU. That raises scant excitement. Who cares, when the kids and moms of Jonesboro are weeping?

Nor are these events, and the reactions to them, shallow or random. The Oscars are assumed to define national success and failure. British media coverage hits exactly the tone you'd expect from the local Texan press and TV. Dallas girl wears stunning red dress to the party. Austin actress misses out. Houston tunesmith triumphs. Local headlines; local assumptions.

We don't notice the difference any longer. If Matt Le Blanc had watched a lap dancer in Abilene, the squawkings would have been the same. Our measurement of our centre of gravity has changed utterly. The assumption that we are just another part of the Greater American Empire is implicit, unquestioned.

Yet pause over Jonesboro, because the signals are also curiously confused. If two berserk boys with an armoury had loosed off in Toulouse or Troyes, would the papers have cleared their front pages and British broadcasters re-ordered their newcasts? Surely not. The tale would have been there for a while, but with nothing like the resonant hysteria. The moms and dads would have spoken that funny Blair language. There would have been no simple echoes of Dunblane or Jamie Bulger, no video nasties to reignite that old debate. For Arkansas, Britain might as well be on the other side of the Moon. But for Britain, Jonesboro gets treated like Tooting or Tottenham.

This is more than odd. It begins to grow choking. The relevance of Jonesboro — if it has any relevance — is that, politically, it truly comes from another world. Nothing, sweet nothing, will be done about the murder and the mayhem in America's armed and dangerous society. For all the tears and the wailings nobody will turn in a gun or promulgate a new law. The crackdown here after Dunblane would be blankly impossible there.

Thus the torrent of articles examining America's obsession with the gun: but barely a trickle making the fundamental connection which lies beyond. The United States is not a society like ours, peopled by men and women like us. It is a deeply foreign land, and — in that sense — deeply alien.

I MAKE no value judgments here. I find fascination and inspiration as the Statue of Liberty hoves into view. But what I don't find is a country which, in most of its instincts, reminds me of Britain — only of an ersatz UK mocked up on the MGM back-lot and peddled wholesale as though it were the real thing.

The Government doesn't seem to sense that divide. Mr Blair, bizarrely, doesn't see the canyon of understanding which yawns between his cosyings with Clinton and his visionary chats to the French Assembly. He doesn't realise that there has to be a choice, however benign. He comprehends, perhaps to excess, the visceral traditions which grip old Ireland, yet cannot define the essence of being British at the end of the 20th century.

Is that an issue, in the political sense? Barely: we just go along for the ride without thinking. We fulminate against the oppressive political cultures of Europe, arriving to denude us of our nationhood, but put out the flags for Oscar nominees and sitcom stars. We bang on about our sovereignty, but turn over the sovereignty of a chunk of GB to a superannuated US Senator. The world of Little Rock seems closer than Calais.

Well, it's all the same language, isn't it? Ours, theirs, the cultural imperialism of convenience: the language of mass TV, movies, pop, the Internet. There is no need to worry like the French or the Germans. Our tongue is the winning side. Other things, though, go with the winning. Other prices are exacted. And it shouldn't take four little dead girls in a playground to tell us so.

A Theory of Government Called Whim

COMMENT
Jim Hoagland

IT IS by now a matter of habit: Returning to health and office, Boris Yeltsin reaches out and fires someone to show that he is back and in charge. No big deal, the White House and the State Department rushed to proclaim last week when Yeltsin unexpectedly dumped his Cabinet. That's Boris, President Clinton seemed to shrug from Africa.

But that's the problem. It is Boris and nothing else. There was not a scintilla of national strategy in the wholesale dismissals. There was no sense even of healthy panic or of agonizing reappraisal. There was only Boris's mood of the moment, and his determination not to go in any one direction for very long.



'Who knows why?' There was no evidence of national strategy in Yeltsin's decision to sack his Cabinet last week. 'Personal loyalty is the only criterion important to him,' said one ex-ally PHOTO: MIKHAIL METZEL

Russia today is governed by whim. Yeltsin has converted his admirable democratic re-election as Russia's president two years ago into a shambling, unpredictable autocracy where he functions as a modern czar. Even those who have worked closely with him since he smashed the Soviet Union at the beginning of this decade cannot predict when and how his next lurch will come.

His most faithful retainer, Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, seems to have had little if any warning that he was about to be sacked and denounced for having done nothing more than carrying out Yeltsin's episodic, vague orders.

The recent word from Moscow was that some key figures in the financial oligarchy that will control the flow of campaign funds for the presidential election in 2000 had moved into Chernomyrdin's camp. Chernomyrdin also seemed to be gaining the upper hand in the struggle for influence with Anatoly Chubais, the abrasive economic theorist who floats in and out of Yeltsin's favor. These developments may have been factors in the government shake-up. Yeltsin has a pattern of knocking down any political ally who seems to be acquiring an independent base. Chernomyrdin's once unparalleled skills at self-effacement had slipped recently.

Or Yeltsin may have simply tired of refereeing Chernomyrdin vs. Chubais and deep-sixed both to get a little peace. In Yeltsin's Russia, it could be that simple. That's why you can't permanently count out either Chernomyrdin or Chubais — unless of course Yeltsin decides this is curtains for either, or for both.

The reassuring guidance offered by the Clinton administration, which suggests that these changes do not amount to much, is misguided. Such abrupt changes undermine consistency and continuity in policy. They may, in fact, be designed to perpetuate the status quo of confusion and conspiracy that dominates Russia's struggling economy.

Yeltsin says Chernomyrdin failed him by not paying off the months of back salaries owed to Russian workers. But he also ordered the prime minister to keep inflation low and the International Monetary Fund loans coming. Those priorities required withholding the salaries in the first place. Unable to change economic conditions, Yeltsin changed his frontmen, and will now presumably give the same irreconcilable tasks to a new team.

"Boris Yeltsin and his entourage are incapable of creating any other structures than those they learned as old party bureaucrats," said Alexander Lebed, the popular retired army general who was briefly a Yeltsin ally and was then dumped. "Personal loyalty is the only criterion" important to Yeltsin.

The disowning of his government reinforces the view that Yeltsin is maneuvering to protect himself, not Russia. But it is time for Yeltsin to perform one last heroic service for his country. He should now renounce any ambition for a third presidential term in 2000, and devote himself to developing not just a successor but a stable political and economic system to carry on what he began. Yeltsin should institutionalize democracy, not himself and his whims.

Growing on Tobacco

Bill McAllister

LITTLE WONDER they call it the golden weed. The $10.3 million that tobacco companies gave Verner, Liipfert, Bernhard, McPherson and Hand last year transformed the law firm into the No. 1 lobby shop in Washington. But the surprise in the 1997 lobbying fee figures is how close previous champ Cassidy & Associates came to Verner's total, and Cassidy, a lobbying and public affairs firm, did it without tobacco money.

Verner totaled $18.2 million last year, according to the year-end reports recently filed with Congress. Cassidy reported billing slightly more than $15.9 million for the year.

Much of Verner's tobacco money also was slated for other consultants pushing the industry's view of the national tobacco settlement. The law firm's lobby-client roster is smaller and includes many clients who paid only five-figure fees. But it also includes the Puerto Rico Economic Development Administration, a longtime client that paid the firm $1.2 million last year, largely to help fight congressional threats to the preferred federal tax status given manufacturers on the island.

At Cassidy, however, six-figure fees were spread among the firm's base of private universities and hospitals, most of which wanted help getting dollars out of the federal treasury. One of Cassidy's biggest clients: Boston University, which paid the firm $760,000 last year.

What did BU get for that? "They helped us to track bills we are interested in and testifying in support of," said Kevin Carleton, the school's public relations director. "They have also helped us identify and track funding opportunities." Since 1985, the private school has received federal grants totaling $56.5 million, which BU has used to build a major science and engineering complex.

With Philip Morris, RJR Nabisco, Brown & Williamson Tobacco, Loews Corp. and UST Inc. each plunking down $2.06 million, most of Verner's other lobby clients may seem relatively small.

Several years ago, the firm embarked on a program to increase its profile. With the help of partners such as former Michigan governor Jim Blanchard, and former senators Robert J. Dole, R-Kansas, George J. Mitchell, D-Maine, and Lloyd Bentsen, D-Texas, the strategy is working, a Verner spokesman said.

Clinton's Guilt Trip

EDITORIAL

BILL CLINTON, by his excursions into national contrition on his current swing through Africa, raised eyebrows on two continents. He expressed regrets for slavery, for the Cold War coddling of some African dictators and for what he calls the country's slowness to respond to genocide in Rwanda. These subjects lie outside traditional diplomacy. His words expose him to the charge that for personal and political reasons he is advertising a lopsided and gratuitous vision of the country he represents.

Still, he is addressing themes deeply relevant to the United States and Africa. Formative developments such as slavery and the Cold War, the continuing African mass upheavals: These are on American as well as African minds. Most Washington talk of foreign affairs goes to matters of policy. The current, quiet policy argument centers on whether the administration has tilted too much toward development and stability as against democracy and human rights. It is necessary to remember, after all, that much African misery is the handiwork of tyrannical post-colonial African governments that were brutal to their own people. To maintain that all this was strictly a consequence of American support for a few truly crummy African leaders is condescending. Rwanda's bloody warfare was only one example of a persisting chaos. The quest for an understanding of these things should not slacken.

Clinton identified American neglect as "the biggest mistake America ever made with Africa over the long run." His trip was designed to counter that neglect. An admission of neglect carries an implicit promise to pay closer attention. The president has not offered new ideas. But some old ideas are still good. Support for Africa's institutional and physical infrastructures should proceed as fast as Africa's own participation permits. The Clinton concern for genocide should translate swiftly into international programs to spare new victims and rescue Africa's millions of refugees.

Banks Agree Holocaust Settlement

John M. Goshko in New York

SWITZERLAND'S three biggest banks have agreed to negotiate a comprehensive global settlement of billions of dollars in claims from Holocaust survivors and their heirs.

Calling the banks' move "a breakthrough," Undersecretary of State Stuart E. Eizenstat told a meeting here of state and municipal financial officers, "They have clearly committed to engage in a process with the hope of a settlement."

New York City Comptroller Alan G. Hevesi, who organized the campaign to put pressure on the banks by threatening sanctions by several U.S. states and cities, said the parties will begin negotiations on April 24. It was his understanding that the aim will be an agreement on "moral and material compensation" for the help given by Swiss banks to Nazi Germany during World War II and their subsequent hindrance of efforts by Holocaust victims and heirs to recover family assets held by the banks.

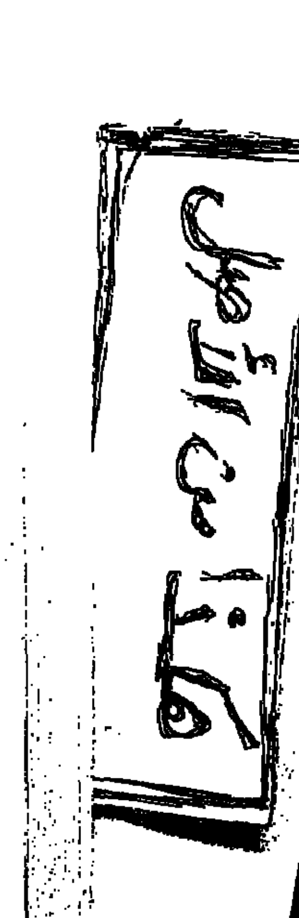
"The hope is that the result will be agreement on a dollar figure for restitution and a statement of moral responsibility demonstrating that the Swiss people recognize that terrible things happened," Hevesi said. He added that the state and local figures involved in his campaign would monitor the negotiations in hopes that "a rough structure for a settlement" will become evident in 60 to 90 days.

Sources familiar with the backroom maneuvering that led to last week's developments stressed that no monetary figure has been agreed on yet and added that considerable bargaining remains over that and other issues. As Hevesi said, "This is an agreement on the structure of a settlement, not the settlement itself."

In a letter delivered to the officials just before they began deliberating whether to impose sanctions, the three banks — Credit Suisse, Union Bank of Switzerland and Swiss Bank Corp. — confirmed that they will deal directly with the World Jewish Congress (WJC), which the Israeli government has designated as its negotiator, and lawyers for some 18,000 plaintiffs in a class-action suit in federal court in Brooklyn that seeks $20 billion from the banks.

Sources familiar with the situation said privately that the banks' action was a victory for Hevesi's tough line. His drive, which he began organizing last fall, was opposed by Eizenstat and other Clinton administration officials who argued that threatening sanctions or boycotts could antagonize the Swiss and make a settlement more difficult.

Hevesi, who lost members of his family in the Holocaust, organized a meeting last December 8 of state and local officials, who decided to postpone until March 31 any punitive measures against the banks. Among those cooperating with Hevesi were senior financial officials from such states as California and Pennsylvania, which have significant investments in Swiss firms and also can exclude the banks from lucrative public financing deals.



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Arkansas Town Begins Quest for Answers

John Schwartz in Jonesboro

WHEN 12-year-old Michael Barnes saw his classmates being gunned down in an ambush outside his school, he dropped to the ground and crawled into the gymnasium, reciting the 23rd Psalm as comfort to get him through.

Why, he wondered, would anyone murder a bunch of kids?

That question was on most everyone's mind as this rural town began trying to make sense of a bloody shooting spree that left five dead and 15 wounded.

Last week, two boys, Mitchell Johnson, 13, and his 11-year-old friend, Andrew Golden, were charged with capital murder after allegedly luring their classmates outside their middle school with a fire alarm and then gunning them down as they emerged into the schoolyard.

Authorities continued to hunt for answers that would explain how the boys got their weapons and what motivated them to attack. At the school, a large wreath, two bouquets and a candle had been placed on the sidewalk leading up to the door.

Classes were canceled and a steam machine had washed the sidewalk of the blood from the ambush. Ten pockmarks in the clean, sandstone-painted cinder-block walls were the only remaining evidence of the violence.

Over and over, people asked what had gotten into the two boys charged with the murders; school principal Karen Curtner said she had never received reports of discipline problems about either one.

But the students at the school knew a different Mitchell Johnson, one who was quick to fight, whether in sports or on the school bus. Several said that Mitchell was angry over the breakup with a girl, who was among the wounded.

Although Barnes himself was not hurt in the gunfire, he was struggling with the horror that Mitchell had warned him that he was angry and going to make people pay.

"He told me he hated everybody, and was going to do it," said Michael Barnes. "I didn't believe him. Nobody believed him. Why should they? He's a little 13-year-old boy."

In an interview with ABC News, Andrew Golden's grandfather said the two boys were desperate to get their hands on weapons. The grandfather said the boys stole three rifles, ammunition and four pistols from his private collection.

Andrew Golden was trained in target shooting at an early age and was taken on hunting trips with his father. ABC aired video footage of Golden as a young child shooting at targets and receiving what appeared to be a rifle as a gift.

Golden, the son of two postal workers, stood expressionless at his arraignment last week. But his 13-year-old friend, Johnson, stood red-faced and teary in his orange jail jumpsuit as the charges were read before Juvenile Court Judge Ralph Wilson Jr.

The two boys are being held at the county jail and a trial date has been set for April 29.

Arkansas law prohibits trying anyone under 14 as an adult, but prosecutor Brent Davis said "there are options that we're looking at," perhaps including removal to federal court where other rules may apply.

The tragedy comes as a visceral shock for tight-knit Jonesboro, usually a placid town about 130 miles northeast of Little Rock that would seem to epitomize the kind of environment where people want to raise kids: murders are rare and the economy has been flourishing. Jonesboro Sun assistant publisher Bob Troutt calls it "the Oasis of the Delta."

"You wouldn't think nothing like this would ever happen here; you'd think things like this would happen in big cities," said Deborah Gibson, a Salvation Army volunteer helping last week at the middle school, where parents and children streamed in and out all day for counseling. Gibson said that a friend was talking with her grandson, who had been in the group of attacked children, and he said, "Like flies, Nana. They were dropping like flies." The boy had dropped quickly to the ground and was unhurt.

Psychiatry offers some general insights, though practitioners generally refuse to comment on cases they have not reviewed in depth. "We have to become aware that technology has created opportunities for children to come face to face with very graphic, realistic violence," said Peter J. Favaro of Port Washington, New York, whose practice includes evaluation of juvenile criminal suspects in New York courts.

Over time, young people become desensitized to violence. "You have to ask yourself what's crazy," Favaro said, "the kids, or the culture?" The fact that the two boys may have acted together did not surprise Favaro, who notes that this "twinning" phenomenon also is a prominent part of teen suicide pacts.

Psychiatrist Robert T.M. Phillips, who serves as medical director of Forensic Consultation Associates of Annapolis, Maryland, said, "Do not be so foolish as to assume that one could watch a movie and go out and commit an act" because of it.

Such violence, he said, is only part of a general decline in civil society that also includes violence in the home, child abuse, and the coarsening of discourse in general. "We have to ask ourselves, what are we doing to contribute to these learned behaviors?"

John Hazlewood whose son attends the school, said that the answers are easier than they might seem. "This is not the kids' problem, it's the way we're raising them today. They only know what you teach 'em," he said. "If they hadn't taken prayer out of school, this never would have happened."

His wife Debbie added: "There was a lot of prayer in this school yesterday."



Pall bearers carry the coffin of Paige Ann Herning, one of the four children who died, along with their teacher, in the Jonesboro shooting PHOTO: JOHN KUNTZ

Counting The Cost

EDITORIAL

AMERICA continues to top the countries of the civilized world in deaths by gunfire. This distinction was punctuated anew last week in Jonesboro. The statistics on firearms and their consequences keep rolling in — never slowing the maneuvering by purveyors and pushers of these weapons to keep up the flow.

Handgun Control Inc. has to keep updating its message, pointing up constantly appalling differences between this country and others: "In 1992, handguns killed 33 people in Great Britain; 36 in Sweden, 97 in Switzerland, 60 in Japan, 13 in Australia, 128 in Canada and 13,200 in the United States."

Another organization, the Violence Policy Center, has released a report, "Where Did You Get That Statistic", of statistical findings that tell the shameful stories behind the too-ready availability of firearms. Each stat is accompanied by a specific reference. Here are a few examples:

- For every case in which an individual used a firearm kept in the home in a self-defense homicide, there were 1.3 unintentional deaths, 4.6 criminal homicides and 27 suicides involving firearms.
- The overall firearm-related death rate among U.S. children aged less than 15 was nearly 12 times higher than among children in the other 25 industrialized countries combined.
- From 1968 to 1991, motor-vehicle-related deaths declined by 21 percent, while firearm-related deaths increased by 60 percent. It is estimated that by the year 2003, firearm-related deaths will surpass deaths from motor-vehicle-related injuries. In 1991 this was already the case in seven states.

The statistics go on, as will the efforts by gun lobbies to find flaws in the research. But more than enough is there to underscore the need — if guns must be such a prevalent way of life — for more effective public-safety measures.

Lebanon Balks at Israeli Offer to Pull Out

John Lancaster in Beirut

FOR 20 years, successive Lebanese governments have demanded — with backing from the U.N. Security Council — that Israel withdraw its forces from Lebanon. Now Israel has expressed its willingness to do that, but Lebanon is balking at the offer, saying the Israelis have attached unacceptable conditions.

In his most detailed discussion of the issue to date, Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri sought last week to explain Lebanon's seemingly contradictory response to Israel's offer to withdraw its troops from the portion of southern Lebanon it occupies as a buffer against guerrilla and rocket attacks on northern Israel.

Casting doubt on the sincerity of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Hariri said it would be "a disaster" for Lebanon to make a separate arrangement with Israel in the absence of a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace settlement to include Syria, which demands that Israel return the strategically situated Golan Heights adjacent to southern Lebanon.

"If Israel wants to withdraw, we welcome that," Hariri said. "But Israel is asking more than that. They want us to . . . be accountable for the [security of Israel's] northern border. In our view, security cooperation among the countries concerned — meaning Lebanon, Israel and Syria — is possible only when we have a peace agreement."

Even if he wanted to, Hariri could not agree to the Israeli proposal without the backing of Syria, which keeps 35,000 troops in Lebanon and dominates the country's foreign policy. Damascus has long supported Shiite Muslim guerrillas fighting to eject Israeli troops from the south, the last active battlefront in the Arab-Israeli conflict. An Israeli withdrawal would effectively deprive Damascus of the one remaining military card in its struggle to regain the Golan, which Israel captured in 1967.

But Lebanon also has compelling reasons to hold out for a comprehensive peace — one that includes a plan for the resettlement of 350,000 Palestinian refugees now living here as unwelcome guests. In the current climate of hostility, moreover, the government is unwilling to take on the responsibility of policing Israel's border, fearing that Israel would respond to any security breaches by retaliating against the entire country.

"Israel wants us to be accountable vis-a-vis Israel," said Hariri. "If Netanyahu wants security cooperation, he should sign a peace treaty."

With Israelis increasingly weary of their costly entanglement in Lebanon, Netanyahu has endorsed a proposal made earlier this year by Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai under which Israel would extract its forces in exchange for Lebanese security pledges. Lebanon also would be required to guarantee the safety of the South Lebanon Lebanese Army, an Israeli-armed militia force in the south.

Appearing with U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan at a news conference in Jerusalem last week, Netanyahu said the Israeli cabinet was close to agreement on formal acceptance of U.N. Security Council resolution 425, a 1978 measure that calls on Israel to "withdraw forthwith" from Lebanon. Annan described Netanyahu's declaration as "significant" but cautioned that an Israeli pullout probably cannot occur without negotiations between the two sides.

And therein lies the rub. Hariri and Syrian President Hafez Assad insist the U.N. resolution calls for Israel to leave the south without any conditions whatsoever. And in the absence of a peace treaty among the three countries, both leaders prefer to keep Netanyahu in the dark about how they would respond to a unilateral Israeli withdrawal.

Asked whether Syria and Lebanon are prepared to disarm the main Shiite militia, Hezbollah, in the event of an Israeli pullout, Hariri replied, "Why should I give them this answer? Let them withdraw and I will do what I have to do."

Like Hariri, Western diplomats here are skeptical about the intentions behind the Israeli proposal, suggesting Netanyahu might be trying to deflect attention from Israel's stalled negotiations with the Palestinians.

At the same time, few are willing to dismiss outright an offer that has elicited widespread discussion in the Arab world while raising hopes that Israel could be closer to a withdrawal since its troops invaded Lebanon in pursuit of Palestinian guerrillas in March 1978.

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Cuba's Health Care System Haemorrhages

Molly Moore in Havana

IN THE operating rooms of Calixto Garcia Hospital, surgeons reuse disposable plastic gloves until they split open. Patients often wait days to receive X-rays because the hospital has run out of film. And the medications physicians prescribe frequently are unavailable at the hospital pharmacy.

"We have difficulties with everything," said a senior administrator at the hospital, where hallways are dark for lack of light bulbs and broken equipment languishes in austere laboratories and examination rooms.

"This used to be our country's premier research hospital. Now we pass around photocopies of medical journals because we can't get the latest literature, we move patients from hospital to hospital searching for equipment that works, and we run out of everything from sutures to syringes to doctors' scrub gowns."

Cuba's health care system — once a showcase of the developing world that compared favorably to U.S. and European medical services — is crumbling beneath the pressures of a national economic crisis and a U.S. trade embargo that have left hospitals short of equipment and patients without access to drugs, say Cuban and international medical authorities.

"A relatively sophisticated and comprehensive public health system is being systematically stripped of essential resources," concluded a study of the Cuban health system by the American Association for World Health, the U.S. committee of the World Health Organization.

No Cuban institution has been harder hit by the economic catastrophes of the last decade than its health care system, which grants free medical services to all citizens as a constitutional right. Cuba was convulsed by an unprecedented economic collapse when its former communist allies in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe disintegrated, severing the Caribbean island nation from billions of dollars in financial assistance and trade.

Nearly simultaneously, in 1992, the U.S. government further tightened its trade restrictions against Cuba, banning the sale of most U.S. products to Cuba through third-country intermediaries.

The health care crisis has become so acute that legislation has been introduced in both the U.S. House and the Senate to ease some embargo restrictions on medicines and food, efforts that were bolstered by Pope John Paul II's denouncements of the embargo's impact on Cubans' health during his January visit to the island. Last month President Clinton decided to relax some of the sanctions.

There are few aspects of the economic crisis that don't touch the health care system: Shortages of gas and tires idle ambulances; power shortages destroy equipment and perishable medications and vaccines; and chronic water shortages and improper treatment of drinking water have led to disease and sanitation problems. Cuba's pharmaceutical factories produce a third of the medicines and drugs they manufactured a decade ago. Pharmacies routinely run out of even the most basic hygiene products, especially women's sanitary napkins.

Even though Cubans have a life expectancy of 75 years — only one year lower than in the United States — the strains on the health, water and sanitation systems is beginning to take a heavy toll.

The death rate from diarrheal diseases increased 250 percent between 1989 and 1994. Nutrition levels have dropped by as much as one-third because of food shortages and poverty, leaving more than 50,000 people with weakened eyesight and motor function. Hospitalization is now risky because of the increased chance of infection: In 1995, dirty water in hospitals led to infection outbreaks that killed 60 patients and sickened another 289.

The number of surgeries performed dropped 40 percent between 1990 and 1995 due to shortages of material, medicines and equipment.

Many physicians, whose salaries are the equivalent of about $20 a month, are deserting the system to take jobs in the tourist industry, driving taxis and working in hotels, where they can earn more money and be paid in U.S. dollars. But, while the number of doctors fell 38 percent between 1970 and 1990, the figure has begun climbing slowly, because of a government push to put more students in medical schools. In 1995, Cuba had 56,925 physicians — 92 percent of its 1970 levels, and one for every 195 people.

Trends in the global marketplace have exacerbated the staggering problems faced by the Cuban health system. With U.S. pharmaceutical giants buying increasing numbers of medical companies in Europe and elsewhere, Cuba has been shut out of many of the newest advances in equipment and treatments because of embargo restrictions. In addition, Cuban hospitals have found it almost impossible to buy replacement parts for equipment purchased from major suppliers that are now U.S.-owned.

Some of the most advanced discoveries in the treatment of cancer, AIDS and other serious ailments are being patented by U.S. companies and Cuban hospitals will not have access to many of them.

The American Association for World Health, in its year-long study completed last year, said new life-prolonging treatments for small children with kidney problems — an area in which U.S. companies have made tremendous progress in recent years — are unavailable to Cubans because of restrictions on U.S.-made equipment and U.S.-patented drugs. The U.S. team reported that patient care is affected by the inability to obtain materials such as nausea-prevention drugs for children undergoing chemotherapy, pacemakers for heart patients and new treatments for people with AIDS.

Even so, Cuba has reduced its already low infant mortality rate. Last year Cuba had 7.2 infant deaths per 1,000 live births — the same as the U.S. average, half the rate of D.C. and six times lower than many of its Latin American neighbors. The health care system has shifted its dwindling resources to the care of children from birth through age 5 and is investing heavily in more than 18,000 neighborhood family clinics.

Ana Margarita Ramirez, 33, a physician, and her nurse, Silvia Reyes Lores, 34, are one of the thousands of doctor-nurse teams who run neighborhood practices. Their office is a clean but Spartan cluster of rooms in a small government building.

"All this is mine," said Ramirez, sweeping her arms across a neighborhood of low-rise concrete block apartments. She ministers to about 500 families, holding office hours in the morning, then spending her afternoons checking on the elderly and the sick and dispensing preventative medical advice to the healthy. I don't have as many resources anymore, I have more work, and I don't have all the medicines I need, but I'm helping my people," she said.

In short supply . . . The pressures of a national economic crisis and a U.S. trade embargo has particularly hit the island's showcase medical services PHOTOGRAPH DAVID CRABTREE

Global Radio Plays to the Masses

Mike Mills

SEVEN years ago, several very wealthy, very private Middle Eastern investors started to put money into a company with an unusual business plan.

Noah Samara, a Washington lawyer, was proposing building a billion-dollar company that would sell a $200 radio offering 75 channels of digital-quality music and news from around the globe using three satellites.

His market would be mostly developing or underdeveloped countries including India, China, much of Africa and parts of the Americas, and his revenue sources would be selling advertising, leasing channels to programmers and possibly selling premium information services by the month.

Despite the risky nature of the plan, his investors have funded him with $950 million so far. More recently, four large Japanese equipment makers agreed to manufacture the radios by the millions. And today, providers of programming, including business news mogul Michael Bloomberg, singer Stevie Wonder and dozens of radio stations around the world, are either planning to provide, or are considering providing, content through the service.

In September, 42-year-old Samara, the founder of WorldSpace Inc., plans to watch the launch of AfriStar, the first of three WorldSpace satellites to go into orbit 22,300 miles above central Africa. The next two, called AsiaStar and AmeriStar, will hover over Asia and the Americas next year.

Most of the 4.6 billion people in WorldSpace's future listening area currently can't pick up a nearby radio station. Samara estimates 300 million of them can and will pay the $200 price of the radio (and the price will plummet, he predicts, once the service takes off). But even if he's way off, Samara says he needs only 10 million listeners to turn a profit. "My concern is not whether I can make this a business," Samara said. "It's how to make it a phenomenon."

Nor do analysts seem particularly concerned about WorldSpace's business prospects. Yes, its audience is hardly hand-picked by Madison Avenue: Listeners speak dozens of languages, come from widely diverse cultures and typically have low buying power. Even so, many who have studied Samara's business plan say the sheer scale of his intended audience makes up for those shortcomings.

"WorldSpace serves a very large potential market for consumer products that cannot be reached by any other advertising medium," said Thomas Watts, a satellite industry analyst for Merrill Lynch in New York.

Samara said he has 20 percent of his satellite capacity filled with programs, including Bloomberg News, which is leasing 23 channels. He also has met with Wonder, who owns radio stations and is interested in providing programming to an African audience. Analysts say other big names, such as the BBC or Voice of America, may join soon after WorldSpace gets its first satellite up, and its business running.

"I think that once he gets any kind of significant penetration, even as low as 20,000 to 30,000 users, he's going to start attracting a lot more interest among program suppliers," said Leslie Taylor, a District-based satellite industry consultant.

Samara isn't viewing the BBC and VOA as crucial anchor programs — most of his initial potential customers can already get those on shortwave radio. What really will excite a mass audience, he said, is being able to hear a radio station across the continent.

PEOPLE in South Africa would love to hear Senegal's hip Sud FM world-music station regularly, rather than having it syndicated only a couple of hours a day. Radio 1 FM, a music and information station out of Gambia, also is highly desired by millions out of its range.

WorldSpace also is creating its own radio programming in ways that don't exist today. Two pending projects include an all-Swahili station and an Africa-wide radio network, which Samara describes as the first attempt at a continental communications service.

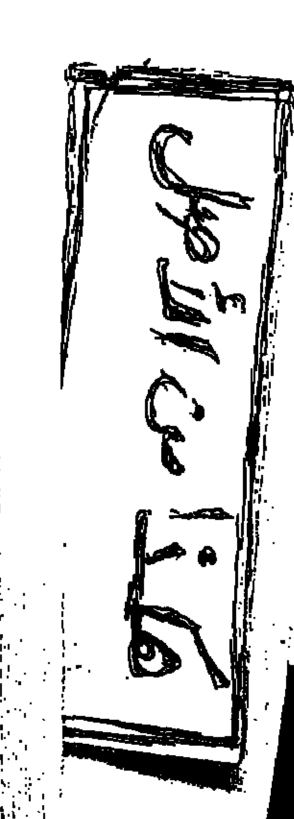
Samara, who grew up in Ethiopia and Tanzania, says that "access to information is the necessary condition for development."

After earning a law degree from Georgetown University, Samara worked as an international trade negotiator for the International Telecommunications Union's periodic meetings of the World Administrative Radio Conference, a sort of United Nations for the air waves that hands out blocks of radio spectrum to nations and businesses.

In April, 1990, Samara came up with the idea to launch a satellite over Africa to provide basic radio service. He left the law firm, developed a business plan and met with venture capital contacts he had made along the way.

Now that Samara is ready to start offering his service, most of the attention is focused on whether he'll be able to sell advertising and whether WorldSpace can procure the kinds of programs that people will want to pay for. But Samara's concerns go beyond the bottom line. He hopes WorldSpace will help to plant the seeds of pan-African consciousness.

"Ten years from now every radio on the [African] continent will have this capacity built into it," said Steven Gavenas, vice president of commercial operations. "It really will feel like the world is in their hands."



Draw on Strength

Dennis Drabelle

THE TATTOO MURDER CASE
By Akimitsu Takagi
Translated from the Japanese by
Deborah Boliver Boehm
Soho. 324 pp. $23

WHEN I was growing up, tattoos were a badge of class — and not one of the higher classes. You couldn't help feeling sorry for the middle-aged guys who had them in the 1950s and 1960s: Graying and paunchy, they had to bear on their arms or chest the fading proof of their youthful folly. Now, of course, things are different (although I still wonder if a whole generation that looks all right as parchment in its twenties won't wake up one morning in its forties muttering, "Look what I'm stuck with").

According to the author of this clever, kinky, highly entertaining novel (first published in 1947 and only now translated into English), tattoos were even more declasse in Japan. To ply the trade was illegal, and to display the results was to write yourself off as a gangster or his moll. Yet, as usual with the Japanese, the issue was more complicated than that: Despite its outlaw status, Japanese tattooing was flamboyant and stylish. A tattooer typically worked with multiple needles and colors. It might take him 100 hours to complete an intricate design, and the tattooee might run a fever for days. The best designs seemed to cry out for preservation like paintings. The immortality-seeking tattoo artist would work a seam into his work, so that after death the bearer could be skinned and the design mounted on a special apparatus.

This is, of course, wholly foreign to the American way of self-decoration, as one of Akimitsu Takagi's characters notes: "Have you seen the ridiculous Americans strutting about, showing off their pathetic 'sushi' tattoos? . . . Unlike the Japanese tattoo, which flows over the contours of the body like a river over stones, the Americans cover their arms with a hodgepodge of unsightly, obvious designs — hearts, anchors, flags, and the like. I suppose an upstart country like the United States doesn't have any tradition or folklore to draw upon, but there's still no excuse for the total lack of artistry."

The person listening to this quasi-scholarly lecture is 29-year-old forensic pathologist Kenzo Matsushita, and it's exactly the kind of thing he wants to hear. As the story begins, he has wandered into a Tokyo tattoo competition, ostensibly out of professional curiosity (he can expect to cut up lots of criminal cadavers in his career). But he hasn't quite persuaded himself that his interest is purely clinical. Most of the contestants wear nothing but loin cloths, and the straitlaced pathologist finds himself ogling the females. He homes in on one in particular, the sexy Kinue Nomura, who happens to be the lover of his old school chum Hisashi Mogami, a gangster. Despite Kenzo's "lifelong lack of success with women," the infatuation seems mutual. Overriding those old school ties, Kenzo makes an assignation with Kinue.

During a night of passion, Kinue tells Kenzo that her father was a tattoo artist who decorated his three children with images of the snake, the frog, and the slug, respectively — a combination that is verboten because of a myth that the three creatures will fight amongst one another. Her tattooed siblings are assumed to have died in the atomic blast at Nagasaki, but their bodies have never been recovered. That family story takes on a more sinister hue a few days later, when parts of Kinue's body — but not the tattooed torso — are found behind the locked door of her bathroom. Although devastated, Kenzo sets out to help his brother, a Tokyo police detective, track down the murderer.

More murders occur; one victim is Kinue's long-lost brother, who turns up alive, though not for long. Kenzo and his brother make little headway in solving the crimes. Their chief target, Professor Hayakawa, a collector of tattoo "pelts," keeps talking his way out of suspicion.

And then their luck turns. Kenzo runs into another old friend, Kyosuke Kamizu, a child prodigy who has grown up to be a "bona fide genius" and, like Kenzo, a physician. His methods may be unorthodox (he subscribes to a theory called "criminal economics" and likes to size up suspects by playing chess with them), his attempts to control his arrogance may be too studied, but his results are flawless.

Kyosuke, in fact, is Holmes-like in his prowess. And the author himself is Doyle-like in framing a baffling puzzle for a ferociously brilliant detective. There are more Western connections: Takagi, who refers in the text to the locked-room mysteries of John Dickson Carr, was a protege of Edogawa Rampo, the great Japanese mystery writer whose pseudonym is a transliteration of Edgar Allan Poe.

And yet The Tattoo Murder Case is quintessentially Japanese. As translated by Deborah Boliver Boehm, the prose is measured, almost stately — which makes the outlandish incidents all the more eerie. The milieu is meticulously rendered: In late-1940s Tokyo, a ruined block is apt to alternate with an intact one, many families have yet to sort out the whereabouts of all their members, and the idea of war is anathema. Above all, the author dwells upon the peculiar world of Japanese tattooing, explaining the sociology and describing the procedure in detail (for example, to keep from writhing and crying out, the tattooee bites down on a towel).

The publicity material accompanying the book mentions that Takagi, who lived from 1920 to 1995, wrote a series of mysteries featuring the formidable Kyosuke Kamizu, of which this is the first. I want more.

More than skin deep . . . Japanese tattooing is explored in Takagi's clever, kinky and highly entertaining novel PHOTO KISHIN SHINOYAMA

Getting the Hell Out of Harlem

Sanford Pinsker

REQUIEM FOR HARLEM
By Henry Roth
St. Martin's. 291 pp. $24.95

THOSE who followed the Bildungsroman of Ira Stigman, Henry Roth's protagonist-alter ego, through the first three volumes of Mercy Of A Rude Stream soon discovered that Roth was destined to be written down as more than the author of Call It Sleep. Roth had emerged — surprisingly and spectacularly — from a 60-year, self-imposed public silence in ways that outstripped the incredible rediscovery of Call It Sleep some 30 years after its initial appearance in 1934. Small wonder, then, that reviewers concentrated on the facts surrounding Roth's literary comeback rather than on the fiction he actually wrote. Given his debilitating arthritis and other vagaries of advanced age, his production of literally thousands of manuscript pages seemed extraordinary enough.

However, what this very late flowering added up to was quite another matter, and one that many critics preferred to keep their own silences about, giving Roth a dubious "pass." After all, many argued, here was someone who had been a talented young writer and then presumably suffered from a long writer's block, only to have the psychic logjam break in his late eighties.

That Roth had, in fact, been writing constantly during the long stretch of years he spent as a precision metal grinder, psychiatric aide, and waterfowl farmer does not quite fit the romantic myths that have sprung up about him. For example, he did not burn his papers, either as a precaution against the witchhunts conducted by Sen. Joseph McCarthy or as a final, bitter admission that he was no longer a "writer." The fact is that Roth had been wrestling all along — and on paper — with deeper, more personal demons, and that pursuing these truths required a courage he discovered only in old age.

Roth always insisted that the central theme of Call It Sleep was "redemption," and the same is true for Mercy Of A Rude Stream. Call It Sleep contained everything Roth had to say about his psychologically battered childhood — and, in the process, nearly everything worthy of note about the immigrant Jewish experience.

Call It Sleep records, in ways that fuse Joycean lyricism with Freudian intensity, just how wrenching was his family's exodus from the nurturing, largely homogeneous milieu of the lower East Side to the anchorless environs of Harlem.

As an elderly Stigman recreates, and intrudes on, his earlier self, the contrapuntal technique allows us to see the arc of American-Jewish adjustment with unparalleled specificity. We learn, for example, how Roth came to embrace a version of Zionism after the Six-Day War and how he ended up rejecting the credos of High Modernism that he associated with James Joyce.

Those who compare Mercy Of A Rude Stream with Call It Sleep, usually by way of waxing eloquent about the latter while they damn the former with faint praise, badly miss the point — for these are not only very different novels, they also pack very different punches. As we watch Ira Stigman navigate his way toward adulthood, the result is an intensity that can perhaps only be described as Dostoyevskian.

The first volumes of Mercy (A Star Shines Over Mt. Morris Park and A Diving Rock On The Hudson, which were followed by From Bondage) gave intimations of deeper guilts to follow but it was not until A Diving Rock On The Hudson, when Ira reveals, in graphic detail, the pattern of incest that had developed with his younger sister, that the thin line separating fiction from autobiography became problematic. Not surprisingly, Roth insisted on the primacy of the imagination (Mercy was, after all, fiction), but many readers were outraged nonetheless.

The sexual beat goes on in Requiem For Harlem, the fourth volume of Mercy, as Ira divides his time between worrying if he has impregnated his cousin and positioning himself as the next lover of Edith Welles (read Eda Lou Walton, a New York University poetry professor and Roth's mentor). At first glance, this does not sound like the stuff of which redemption is made, but Roth's candor is more confessional (in the sense of spiritual cleansing) than it is prurient. As Larry Fox, Roth's longtime friend and literary editor, put it: "Henry could not die false . . . and only when he could reveal the truth about himself could he become free. In fact, he remained alive to unburden himself so that he could die free and perhaps free all of us."

Moreover, there are good reasons to believe that Roth's unflinching, shivery honesty could begin only after his wife's death in 1990, and that, writing under the shadow of his own death, he was able, at long last, to tell a story that spared him — and us — nothing. Granted, what I've just surmised is provisional. A Henry Roth biography — and there will surely be one, one day — may alter these assumptions, just as Mercy changed the outlines of the Henry Roth we thought we knew. One thing is clear, however: Requiem For Harlem, which ends with Ira Stigman leaving his parents' apartment in Harlem to move in with Edith Welles, recapitulates many stations of the cross that Stephen Dedalus enacts in the final pages of Joyce's Portrait Of The Artist As A Young Man. Ira's mother — like Stephen's — packs his suitcase and makes sure that he has freshly laundered handkerchiefs.

His final burst of bravado says it all: "He cut south, avoiding the monotonous facade of the 119th Street tenements, preferring the holiday smells of the clangorous avenue before him. Turn back? God, no. He could only get away, that was all. He switched the parcel from right to left, the only evidence of Harlem past lying in that motley carton . . . As luck would have it, the express shrieked to a halt. Ira boarded the train, his cold fingers still aching, and strait was the route, and strait the rails — the IRT swerved, squealing on the tracks of the long curve westward as it repaired downtown and the hell out of Harlem."

Originally, the massive manuscript Roth left at his death in 1995 was to be published in six volumes, but that changed to the tetralogy that Requiem For Harlem now completes. Harlem frames Mercy from Ira's arrival in 1914 to his departure in 1928. What Roth called "batch 2" — written in a single narrative voice and separated by a 12-year break from the events recounted in Mercy — will be brought out separately. I suspect that this was a sound editorial decision. The sweep of Mercy requires both a youthful Ira Stigman coming of age in the modern city and an elderly Stigman who speaks to his computer — and his past — across the chasm of regret.

Any tetralogy can seem daunting, but the good news is that Roth wrote each installment as virtually a separate book, able to be savored on its own terms. Requiem For Harlem would be a good place for new readers of Roth to begin; others, more familiar with the earlier novels, will find that the last volume more than lives up to the promises of the previous three.

Blair's French lesson

EDITORIAL

FRENCH-STYLE socialism and Britain's New Labour continue to stand for very different conceptions of what it means to be on the left. The speech that the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, gave before the French national assembly on March 24, the stony expression on the face of his French counterpart, Lionel Jospin, during part of his address, and the obvious irritation of the employment minister, Martine Aubry, at the end of his speech only served to underscore that difference.

The Labour party and its leader are a pragmatic lot, and they have no hang-ups about the way they approach the traditional dogma of the left. Does their attitude point up a certain rigidity in that of the French Socialist party, despite the fact that it is now a modernised party that has repudiated its old-fashioned ways?

Yes, say those who wish that Jospin were a "French Tony Blair". Others, however, tend more to the view that the policies adopted by Blair, which no doubt take account of Britain's specific political environment, offer a solution that is debatable when it comes to the fundamentals of democracy, at a time when democracy and the people who embody it in France are going through a serious crisis.

Expansive speech . . . Tony Blair addresses deputies at the national assembly in Paris PHOTO LAURENT REBOURS

When Blair says there is no such thing as leftwing or rightwing economic policies, but just "good" or "bad" economic policies, he seems to subscribe to a school of thought which holds that political differences are no longer important, and that with a neo-liberal model of globalisation we no longer have any choice in the matter anyway.

The French left put that argument into practice in the late eighties and early nineties. The consequence of that was a disastrous performance by the left at the 1993 general election and a successful bid for the presidency by the rightwing Jacques Chirac in 1995.

The disrepute into which the political community has fallen in the eyes of French voters is not solely the result of its failure to live up to the moral standards required of those in public life. It has also been due to a general feeling among the electorate that successive governments, faced with serious economic constraints, have proved unable to improve its standard of living.

The persistence of a high unemployment rate and the increase in the number of socially excluded have come to symbolise that inability. And one of the reasons the far-right National Front has made gains is that, pandering as it does to the wishes of the electorate, it is the only political party to claim that the solutions it proposes will bring about a radical improvement.

Jospin knows what processes are at work. He is perhaps the first French prime minister to have realised that he needs to exploit his now much-reduced room for manoeuvre for all it is worth so as not to make the electorate — right as well as left — even more disaffected.

Paradoxically, once the French Socialists get over their irritation at the enthusiastic reception the British Prime Minister's speech got from the rightwing benches, Blair's lesson in pragmatism may turn out to be not all that different from Jospin's own approach to governance.

(March 26)

France put in the dock on Rwanda

Rémy Ourdan and Claire Tréan

THE Committee of Inquiry into France's action in Rwanda, headed by Paul Quilès, a former minister and member of the Socialist party, held its first session on March 24. It was devoted to the hearing of evidence.

The committee, which is made up of 10 members of the parliamentary foreign affairs committee, 10 members of the defence committee and their alternate members, has decided that it will if necessary call the highest French political and military authorities to the witness stand.

The first to give evidence were two academics, Claudine Vidal, head of research at the National Scientific Research Centre, and André Guichaoua, a professor at Lille university.

They were supposed to describe the historical and sociological background to the fighting that led up to the 1994 massacres. This initial hearing had plainly been designed as a purely informative exercise that aimed to give the committee members some background to the complexities of the situation in Rwanda at the beginning of the nineties.

But things turned out rather differently. The two witnesses departed from their professional brief and criticised France's role in Rwanda. Vidal explained how, in the course of Rwanda's history — particularly its colonial history — the notion of ethnic identity had been manufactured in an artificial way that had nothing to do with objective criteria.

She added: "More seriously, we realised that many of the [French] had an attitude to the issues concerned] that purely and simply mirrored the Hutu extremists' propaganda. Where did they get their opinions from?"

Guichaoua, who had the task of describing how the political situation had evolved during the years leading up to the 1994 massacres, peppered his account with a series of questions about the behaviour of the French authorities.

He focused on the fact that during clashes between the Rwandan army and the Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front, French troops, while in theory carrying out an evacuation operation, seemed to have been directly "involved in the conduct of military operations".

As he was present in Rwanda at the time, Guichaoua was able to give a first-hand account of how, when the massacres had already started, "Tutsi Rwandan staff employed by the French embassy, the French Cultural Centre and the French Development Bank were deliberately abandoned to their fate by their employers, who in this respect behaved exactly like other major international employers such as the United Nations Development Programme and various other embassies."

Hearings are scheduled to take place at a rate of two per week. They will be held in public, unless a witness wants a hearing to be held in camera. The mission should complete its report by the end of the year.

(March 26)

'It's time to recognise Kosovo's independence'

Ibrahim Rugova, the unofficial ethnic Albanian president, talks to **Denis Hautin-Guiraut**

HOW do you explain the violence by the Serbian police in Kosovo on March 24?

It's difficult to understand exactly why there has been such a fierce crackdown in the region of Drenica. There's obviously a determination to put pressure on the population and to intimidate them.

Certain Serbian extremists still plan to carry out a programme of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. Several thousand people have already left their villages. And then there's also a determination to provoke clashes, to cause suffering and to use increasingly threatening tactics against unarmed and helpless people.

It is true, isn't it, that there have been attacks on Serbian police?

As far as that so-called Kosovo Liberation Army is concerned, it's not impossible that there exist groups of ill-assorted and frustrated individuals, or that the Serbian secret service may have had a hand in it all.

On the other hand, I'm convinced that there's no organised army. The region has been much too closely controlled, and over far too long a period, for such an organisation to have been able to come into existence. It's all a pretext, and the Serbian police use isolated and unconnected incidents as an excuse to organise reprisals against defenceless families.

What do you expect the Contact Group (Germany, the United States, France, Britain, Italy and Russia) to achieve?

The Contact Group must keep up its pressure on Belgrade so that a genuine and wide-ranging dialogue can be initiated. The diplomats I met in Pristina are agreed on this point: pressure on Belgrade must be maintained so as to take the heat out of the situation in Kosovo. This is something the US secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, has also stressed.

I hope too that it will continue to press Belgrade to withdraw police from Drenica and special Serbian forces from Kosovo. That has not yet been done.

What role do you expect the 15 "presidential advisers" that you have just appointed to play?

I expect them to prepare meetings with Serbian representatives. We must begin talks on political agreement. We're still asking that a mediator be appointed.

The advisers include people who have often been critical of me [such as Adem Demaqi, Rugova's main political opponent], and whom I've asked to help me in this task. For the time being, what we're aiming to do is to set up consultations, but not negotiations as such.

On March 24, some 20,000 Serbs took to the streets of Pristina to protest against the return of Albanians to Kosovo's schools and universities. Are you afraid things may get out of hand?

I called on all the demonstrators, whether Serbian or Albanian, to be extremely vigilant and resist any form of provocation. There were a few clashes last week, but up to now, fortunately, nothing serious.

The trouble is that the people who lead the Serbian demonstrations, and who don't necessarily come from Pristina, sometimes get worked up and go for radical solutions.

Aren't your demands for independence, which have been rejected by virtually the entire international community, likely to inflame the situation?

I was elected president [of the unrecognised "Republic of Kosovo"] on an independence ticket. The time has come to recognise Kosovo's independence. Naturally I can see that there will have to be a transitional period entailing the demilitarisation of Kosovo and international protection.

But people have to get it into their heads that if we are refused independence this part of the Balkans will remain a potential flashpoint. Contrary to the view held elsewhere, only the independence of Kosovo will stabilise the region.

That is something the Albanians of Albania and Macedonia are also agreed on. There can be no doubt that the most dangerous thing of all would be for the present situation to continue.

(March 26)



Rugova: call for vigilance

Battling against a colonial mindset

EDITORIAL

EVER since the French government colonised New Caledonia in the middle of the 19th century, it has shown itself ready to use the big stick when necessary. It has also tailored immigration flows to suit its own needs.

In 1891 the first contingent of 800 foreign workers were shipped into the island's capital, Nouméa, from Asia. They worked 12 hours a day in the mines and were paid a pittance, housed in shacks and forced to observe a curfew. Because their names were considered unpronounceable, they were given numbers as a means of identification.

In the fifties, at the height of France's war in Indochina, the Asian immigrants were peremptorily sent back to where they had come from — which was no longer their home. The French argued that they might form a fifth column.

Half a century later, in November 1997, a handful of people fleeing poverty and oppression in China — 69 men, 21 women and 20 children — set out to sea in fishing boats and landed on New Caledonia. They were interned in a derelict barracks by the authorities.

When 60 of them protested against a recent deportation order by climbing on to the roof of the barracks on March 22, police fired rubber bullets at them, wounding two seriously. The deportation order was postponed later that same day.

It is well known that the laws of the French republic have regularly been flouted in New Caledonia, largely at the expense of its indigenous population. The Kanaks have been reduced to a minority and economically sidelined. On top of that their Melanesian culture has been repudiated.

Ever since it was colonised, New Caledonia has been the scene of violent incidents triggered by accumulated acts of injustice. Was there any need to make the record even worse by using brute force against defenceless refugees and peppering them with rubber bullets as though they were rabbits?

Under no circumstances are such methods employed elsewhere in France. So why were they used in New Caledonia? Perhaps the authorities thought that this brutal act could somehow be justified by the remoteness of the overseas territory and the fact that French people had their minds on other things, namely the regional elections in metropolitan France.

The decision was probably also influenced by the fact that the two main political parties in New Caledonia — the loyalist Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République (RPCR), and the separatist grouping, the Front de Libération National Kanak et Socialiste (FLNKS) — are both equally keen to rule out any prospect of the group of immigrants becoming integrated.

This is the first time in New Caledonia that the government, the loyalists and the separatists have made common cause. They could not have chosen a worse cause — the exclusion and brutalisation of the weak.

The reception given to a small community of 110 people who are highly unlikely to have any destabilising effect on New Caledonia is surely just as important a test for the territory's future as the current negotiations on its status.

The future face of New Caledonia will hinge on how its European and Melanesian communities respond to the way the government has so far dealt with the desperate plight of the Chinese refugees.

Will they all decide to live together in a spirit of open-mindedness — in the best tradition of Oceanian culture — or withdraw into an inward-looking community that is unable to focus on anything except its mineral wealth and the bitter legacy of its past?

(March 24)



Football fever . . . Air France planes feature a player in action. There are fears that many visitors m[ay] avoid France, the world's most popular destination, during the World Cup finals PHOTO: JACK DABS[?]

Football may keep France's tourists at bay

Pascale Krémer

WILL the World Cup cause tourists to shun France? The football mega-event had until recently been regarded as a boon for the French tourist industry. But now, with less than three months to go before kick-off, the department of tourism is beginning to get the jitters. Paradoxical though it may seem, it fears that the French tourist industry's excellent results in 1997 will not be repeated in 1998.

Last year a record 67 million tourists visited France (an increase of 7 per cent over 1996), easily the world's favourite tourist destination, ahead of the United States (49 million) and Spain (43 million).

Jean-Charles Petitpierre, head of advertising at the department of tourism, says: "Between June 10 and July 10, 6 million foreign tourists usually visit France. But just under 1 million tickets for the World Cup have been sold abroad, which means we can expect the actual number of 'sporting' tourists to be 350,000-500,000 — people usually come with several tickets.

"During the World Cup in Spain in 1982 and in Italy in 1990, the number of tourists dropped by about 30 per cent. So we may lose 1.8 million visitors and gain only 500,000, which represents a shortfall of 1.3 million."

What will make matters worse is that, with 32 teams selected instead of 24 at the last World Cup, matches will cover a period of 33 days as against only 20 in 1994.

"We're concerned about this," Petitpierre admits. "While 10 cities will get a spin-off from the World Cup, France's 35,990 other *communes* that are not involved may come off badly. People in, say, Los Angeles imagine there'll be so many traffic jams that the whole of France will grind to a halt."

Potential tourists are also afraid of transport problems, bomb attacks and price hikes. There have already been articles in the German and Dutch press about hotel owners in Paris, Bordeaux and Lyon, who have quietly upped their prices by as much as 300 per cent.

The vast majority of foreign visitors usually come from countries that have qualified for the World Cup (Britain, Italy, Spain, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and the US, among others). Such tourists may postpone their holidays in France so as to be able to devote themselves fully to the task of supporting their teams. This could result in an unmanageable avalanche of tourists in August, particularly at coastal resorts.

In the hope of making the World Cup less likely to cause people to postpone their holidays, the government's information service and a number of private partners (such as Air France and Club Méditerranée) have earmarked an emergency fund of several hundred thousand dollars to pay for an advertising campaign in Spain, Italy, Britain, Germ[any], Japan and the US that will prom[ote] less well-known holiday desti[na]tions in France and put across [the] idea that people can have [fun] throughout the summer even [when] there is no football.

The department of tourism is [also] about to launch a "blue-price op[era]tion", which will aim to encour[age] the owners of hotels, restaura[nts], cafés, camping sites and coun[try] *gîtes* to peg their prices at a rea[son]able level. Tourist industry pro[fes]sionals who pledge not to incre[ase] their prices between June 10 [and] July 12 will be authorised to put [a] notice on the front of their establi[sh]ments that will read: "Here, price[s] are not going up." Lists of th[ose] who join the scheme will be av[ail]able at tourist offices, railw[ay] stations and airports.

"Some tourist industry prof[es]sionals . . . are aware that the ima[ge] they put across this summer w[ill] affect their performance in 19[99], 2000 and 2001," says Petitpierre.

A campaign costing 3 mill[ion] francs ($500,000) is to be launch[ed] shortly by the department [of] tourism to rally the French pop[ula]tion's interest in the World Cup a[nd] "to make them proud to welco[me] the whole world".

The subtext of all this is: try to b[e] a little nicer to foreigners. While foo[t]ball may have the effect of putting [off] tourists, it could also be said th[at] France is afraid of its own faults.

(March 21)

Basque commandos seized in Spanish police raids

Marie-Claude Decamps in Madrid

IN A spectacular series of raids carried out in several Basque Country towns on March 19, Spanish security forces arrested 10 people suspected of belonging to the Araba Commando, an operational unit of the armed Basque separatist organisation ETA. Documents, weapons and 120kg of explosives were also seized from flats searched by police.

The Araba Commando is thought to have been responsible for four bomb attacks — including one on the headquarters of the ruling People's party (PP) in Santander — which caused considerable damage but no deaths. It is the second ETA commando unit to have been broken up by the Civil Guard in the Basque Country. Six months ago the Vizcaya Commando suffered the same fate for the second time in its existence.

Of the 10 people arrested, two are on police files as presumed ETA activists. They are Ignacio Crispin Garces Beitia, known as Inaki, aged 31, who was arrested in France in 1987 and deported to Spain, then tried and acquitted in 1990; and Aitor Bores Gutierrez, alias Patxi, aged 33, who had been on the run since an earlier Vizcaya Commando, to which he was thought to belong, was broken up four years ago. The two men are suspected of having taken part in seven separate attacks.

The success of the raids enabled the Spanish interior minister, Jaime Mayor Oreja, to claim that ETA's operational capability had been reduced to "a single commando group, the Donosti Commando". He argued that "the very basis of the anti-terrorist campaign should continue to be [the public's] confidence in the state's security forces".

The police coup came at a time of political confusion. Two days earlier, the "peace plan" for the Basque Country proposed by the *lehendakari* (the head of the Basque government), José Antonio Ardanza, was turned down by the PP and the Socialist party, who found it "unrealistic". The Socialists' fear is that the plan will further fuel the aspirations of the ultra-nationalists.

This means that the plan is to all intents and purposes stillborn. It will be given a second reading only after the election of the Basque Autonomous Parliament, scheduled for the autumn.

Ardanza, who belongs to the moderate Basque Nationalist party (PNV) and has decided not to stand again for the post of *lehendakari*, hoped that the peace proposal would be his "political testament". With that in mind he had presented it to the Ajuria Enea, the assembly that groups together all Basque democratic forces except the separatist coalition, Herri Batasuna (HB), ETA's political wing.

To put an end to violence in the Basque Country, Ardanza suggested opening up a dialogue — which he regards as a vital counterbalance to police repression, which cannot on its own solve the problem — by including HB in the negotiations, on condition that ETA agreed to stop killing people.

The dialogue was supposed to be "without restrictions": no issue, including the possible right to self-determination, would be taboo. The PP and the Socialists, both involved in an election campaign aimed at eroding the PNV's constituency in the Basque Country, felt the id[ea] was "too risky". They preferred [to] put their money on successful p[o]lice operations as a method of co[m]bating ETA terrorism.

The awkward predicament of th[e] PNV, which is torn between [its] nationalist urge to bring together a[ll] the different Basque politi[cal] strands and its pragmatic suppor[t] for the Madrid government and [the] PP — whose intransigence it co[n]demns — may have the effect [of] weakening the cohesion of dem[o]cratic forces in the Basque Count[ry] that is so vital for the fight again[st] terrorism.

(March 21)

Le Monde

Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

Random sale may herald rationalisation

Emily Bell

IT IS difficult to know which aspect of last week's sale of publisher Random House to be most surprised by: the fact that the enormously wealthy yet notoriously parsimonious Westphalian Bertelsmann has finally bought something, or that Advance Publications, the United States company led by the charismatic S I Newhouse, decided to sell with so little warning.

The price paid, widely rumoured to be around $2 billion, makes the deal an easy option for the Newhouse family business. The Random House stable of authors, which includes Salman Rushdie, Martin Amis, John Grisham and Michael Crichton, might look like a money-printing outlet, but senior executives at the company have battled to improve modest returns.

Bertelsmann will add the asset to its Bantam Doubleday Dell publishing group and rename the whole shooting match Random House.

Meg Geldens, media analyst with Merrill Lynch, says: "There are signs with this purchase that Bertelsmann is deciding to focus very firmly on the consumer business, in the same way that Reed has focused on professional publishing.

"The next move may be to rationalise some of the divisions which fall outside the consumer area."

While the crowned heads of publishing remain agog at the overwhelming — and some might think undesirable — concentration of power within the book world, Bertelsmann remains something of a dull enigma when arrayed against the other great European media operations.

With Rupert Murdoch and Silvio Berlusconi locked in Machiavellian intrigue, it is easy to forget that Bertelsmann trounces even News Corporation in size. But as it seeks no political clout through owning news or opinion publications outside Germany, it does not excite the same kind of interest.

The same could not be said of the Newhouse family and Advance Publications. As the gilded family of American publishing, with the Condé Nast titles and the New Yorker magazine as their most high-profile businesses, this re-ordering of the family silver has prompted observers to sit up and take notice of this latest development.

When a man like Newhouse relinquishes his hold on a coterie of writers as famous as those on the Random House list, it prompts speculation that he may be looking for further strategic modifications.

There is little doubt that Advance will keep a tight hold on its glamorous and profitable Condé Nast magazine division. The only trail of red ink is the New Yorker, which still loses around $10 million a year.

The advertising community in New York has been expecting the New Yorker to be moved closer to the Condé Nast bosom — with joint advertising sales tying the title to its profitable siblings.

This would be an entirely rational move, but is a long way from the idea that Advance may be about to put sentiment on the back burner and cut loose other publications which look good in a portfolio but do not contribute to the bottom line.
— *The Observer*

Lean times . . . Food aid to developing countries has declined sharply PHOTO JOHN MOORE

Asia backlash hits the poor

Charlotte Denny

DEVELOPING countries face a deepening crisis as rich governments' aid budgets sink to new lows, the World Bank warned last week. Their problems will be compounded by the fall-out from the Asian crisis which has caused private investors to pull out of emerging markets.

Private investment in low- and middle-income countries reached an all-time high last year of $256 billion, six times the size of official aid budgets, according to the World Bank's annual report on aid and investment. But most of the money was lent before turbulence began to spread throughout Asia in the second half of the year, causing investors to retreat from emerging markets.

"This is a year where we saw not just the opportunities but also the risks of international capital flows," said Joseph Stiglitz, the World Bank's chief economist. "The East Asian crisis — and its worldwide ramifications — reminds us of the risks that private capital poses for all countries."

The World Bank forecasts that three of the five countries involved in the crisis, Indonesia, Thailand and South Korea, will suffer economic contraction or zero growth this year, while growth rates in Malaysia and the Philippines will fall sharply.

Third World countries not involved in the original crisis will also suffer from the fall-out, according to the World Bank, as investors lump them with the countries in trouble. Long-term investment flows to developing countries may fall in 1998, adding to the problems caused by the ongoing decline in aid from rich countries.

Official aid from Western governments, which remains the most important source of development finance for the poorest countries, declined last year to $37.3 billion, a drop in real terms of 12.3 per cent on the previous year, and the fifth year in a row that grants and soft loans to the most needy countries have declined. Aid budgets are nearly a third lower than 10 years ago in real terms, having fallen to 0.25 per cent of rich countries' annual output, compared with 0.35 per cent when the West was at its most generous in the early 1980s. Only the Scandinavian countries meet the 0.7 per cent target set by the United Nations.

"There is a real danger that . . . we are reaching such new lows that we will not be able to provide the development needs of the world's poorest countries in today's global economy," said Masood Ahmed, the World Bank's vice-president for poverty reduction.

The World Bank says donors have been getting stingier at a time when more people need aid. The number of people living on less than a $1 a day rose from 1.2 billion in 1987 to 1.3 billion in 1993, while access to education and health services has worsened.

"The decrease in foreign aid threatens many of the poorest countries in the world, which are most in need of capital but have the least ability to attract private money," said Professor Stiglitz.

The World Bank blames the turmoil in Asia mostly on under-regulated, weak financial sectors in the countries concerned. But destabilising "hot money" flows turned what began as a problem in the Thai property market into a crisis for the whole region. Investors rushed to pull out money from the crisis-hit countries, compounding the structural problems.

Prof Stiglitz said it was time to talk about reforms "that can bring the advantages of globalisation while reducing their risks".

Declining aid
Aid flows, US current $bn — Grants / Concessional loans
1990 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997
Overseas development aid, net, % of GDP
Norway, Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, France, Germany, Italy, UK, Japan, US

UK proposes new World Bank lending policy

Alex Brummer

BRITAIN is to propose a radical reform of the World Bank's lending policy, under which the bigger developing countries would pay higher charges for their loans, with the extra income diverted to the globe's poorest nations.

Details of the UK proposal are expected to be unveiled by the British Chancellor, Gordon Brown, at this month's spring meetings of the World Bank/International Monetary Fund in Washington. The proposal could find its way on to the agenda for the Birmingham Group of Seven summit in May. The G7 agenda will be tightly focused on the Asian crisis and Britain's efforts to combat debt and poverty in Africa.

Preliminary work suggests that by charging higher rates to bigger emerging market economies such as China, India and Brazil, the World Bank could generate greater income, which could be diverted to the poorer countries of Africa, Central America and the former Soviet Union, via the Bank's trust funds.

The extra cash would be particularly valuable in advancing the joint World Bank/IMF scheme to cancel the debt of the poorest nations of Africa by 2000.

The British proposal is likely to be viewed sympathetically by the United States, the Bank's largest shareholder, and from the president of the World Bank. However, there may be less enthusiasm from Germany, which until now has shown scant support for the efforts led by Britain to ease the debt burden of the poorest countries.

It is bound to be contentious among the World Bank's big customers, including China and India, which will have factored-in cheaper borrowing costs. But since several of these countries run balance of payments surpluses, meeting the extra cost should not be a problem.

In Brief

JACQUES SANTER, the European Commission president, offered Britain "flexibility" on the requirements for joining the European single currency, and said that two years' probation inside the Exchange Rate Mechanism might be waived if the pound remained stable. Meanwhile DeAnne Julius, one of the Bank of England's top economists, warned that unemployment would soar in every country that joined the single currency.

OPEC oil producers approved their first output cuts in years under a pact to lower supply by about 2 per cent and raise prices in alliance with non-cartel petroleum powers.

JAN LESCHLY, chief executive of SmithKline Beecham, set a new British record for executive pay with a salary and perks package worth nearly $115 million, prompting speculation that vast US-style remuneration deals might gain a foothold in Britain.

ROGUE TRADER Yasuo Hamanaka was jailed for eight years for his pivotal role in the $2.6 billion Sumitomo copper scandal, which created chaos on the copper market.

TONY BLAIR announced a $160 million package to help businesses forestall chaos predicted as a result of the millennium computer bug.

LLOYDS TSB, the UK's biggest high street bank, was ordered to withdraw a memo telling staff not to switch customers into accounts that would pay them higher rates of interest.

THE gap between rich and poor in Britain narrowed in the last few years of the Tory government, reversing the trend of the Thatcher years, according to the Rowntree Foundation.

THE fashion empire Next saw $1,000 million wiped off its share value in one day after it said its profits were in decline as a result of stocking clothes that were too trendy for its customers.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates March 30	Sterling rates March 23
Australia	2.5286-2.5316	2.5119-2.5153
Austria	21.76-21.77	21.65-21.67
Belgium	63.79-63.89	63.17-63.28
Canada	2.3844-2.3863	2.3770-2.3793
Denmark	11.79-11.80	11.67-11.68
France	10.36-10.37	10.27-10.27
Germany	3.0927-3.0954	3.0639-3.0668
Hong Kong	12.99-12.99	12.98-12.99
Ireland	1.2301-1.2326	1.2190-1.2215
Italy	3,048-3,052	3,016-3,021
Japan	221.51-221.78	218.34-218.63
Netherlands	3.4861-3.4888	3.4531-3.4560
New Zealand	3.0233-3.0285	2.9789-2.9843
Norway	12.70-12.72	12.66-12.67
Portugal	316.73-317.06	313.65-313.90
Spain	262.46-262.70	259.74-260.01
Sweden	13.28-13.30	13.30-13.32
Switzerland	2.5443-2.5469	2.5002-2.5034
USA	1.6770-1.6778	1.6762-1.6772
ECU	1.5558-1.5578	1.5412-1.5437

FTSE 100 Share index down [illegible] at [illegible]. FTSE 250 index up [illegible] at [illegible]. Gold up [illegible] at [illegible].

Birkbeck's imaginative use of the Internet is steering its courses towards more students. **Donald MacLeod** talks to the new man at the helm

College casts a wider Net

FOR a man who is expanding his university on to the Internet, Tim O'Shea can be remarkably rude about computers. A "cargo cult" is how he describes much of the enthusiasm for installing new technology in schools and universities in the fond hope that learning and teaching will automatically improve.

The new Master of Birkbeck College, London, insists that there is no point in setting up virtual courses on the Net without the research back-up. "It isn't enough to have the wires, you have got to be using the technology in a meaningful way," he says. Simply putting a book on to a CD-Rom can be "gormless" — his favourite hate is the Maastricht treaty on disk.

Birkbeck already has more than 60 students actively following crystallography degrees via the Net — the college would be happy to have 16 in such a specialised subject if they were drawn from London alone, remarked Professor O'Shea.

For the institution that once boasted Rosalind Franklin — one of the trio of scientists who discovered DNA — it is a natural extension. "It builds on an unambiguous research strength of the college. We are the only university with a department of crystallography. Birkbeck can reach out around the world and say we are world leaders — you can come to Bloomsbury metaphorically and do it."

Digitised images of molecules which a student can explore on screen seem more suited to new technology than Impressionist paintings. But history of art courses are particularly suited to computer-based study now that museums and auction houses, such as Christie's and Sotheby's, as well as universities, have archives of digitised images. Until now students had to come into the college's premises to look at slides. Now a curator in Paris or New York or Los Angeles can follow a virtual Birkbeck course.

Perhaps surprisingly, one of the oldest areas of academic life — the classics — could expand through new technology. All the texts are on electronic databases.

Archaeology is another potential boom area for the same reason — the information from digs is now stored on computers and available to students.

With the fourth-highest proportion of active research staff after Cambridge, Edinburgh and Warwick, Birkbeck sustains its advanced teaching by research, says Prof O'Shea. "The concept of a teaching-only university is really unhelpful. Without the research you are wasting your time. That's why Oxford and Cambridge do well in teaching quality because in the end the research feeds through."

Birkbeck does not fit the usual profile of a university. More than nine out of 10 of its 6,000 degree students are part time. There are another 20,000 extra-mural students. "We are a small university and the only game in town is to grow. We are not about to put up many buildings but we can carry the special qualities and our research strengths to a wider audience.

"People are boxed into busy careers — we can reach the bits of your time that other universities can't. We cannot use technology to teach more cheaply but we can to reach out to a wider number of people. There is no way it would replace the current staff with computers."

Birkbeck survived an extremely serious funding crisis and under his predecessor, Tessa (now Lady) Blackstone, emerged bigger and financially healthier — a remarkable achievement which gives her credibility in dealing with the higher education sector as a minister, he says.

There is nothing to stop any number of people from "eavesdropping" on a Birkbeck course on the Net. That is fine by Prof O'Shea, it acts as an advertisement — but they must pay fees for help from tutors or assessment that leads to the final certificate.

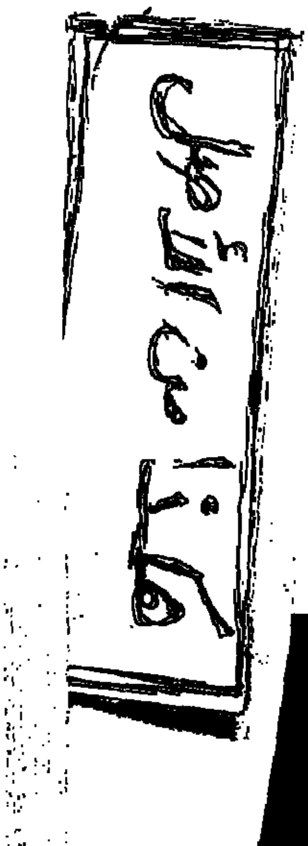
He sees no contradiction between the importance of classics and history of art and the Government's enthusiasm for lifelong learning and a workforce constantly updating its skills. "Education is deeper than understanding the particular vocational skills you need to perform your job in the year you graduate . . . Sometimes there seems to be an overemphasis on a narrow definition of vocational education."

Research is essential but it cannot be done on a narrow basis. "We can't predict the future but we need to make sense of it as it occurs." That can mean putting vocational knowledge in a context of philosophy or literature or fundamental science.

"It is easy to respond and say a will set up a course on computers and tourism or hotel business. But you need to put them into a larger context so that, 10 years from now people will be able to make sense of what is happening."



Seat of learning . . . Birkbeck's Professor O'Shea wants to bring the world to London's Bloomsbury PHOTOGRAPH



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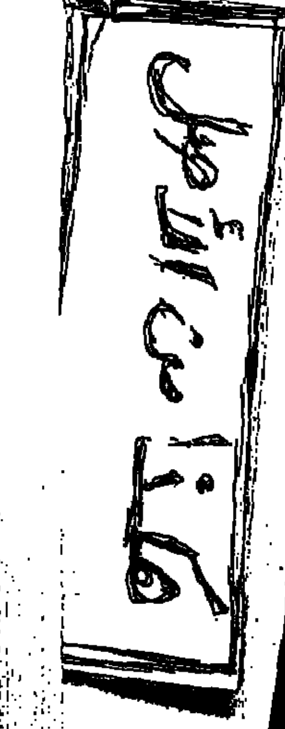
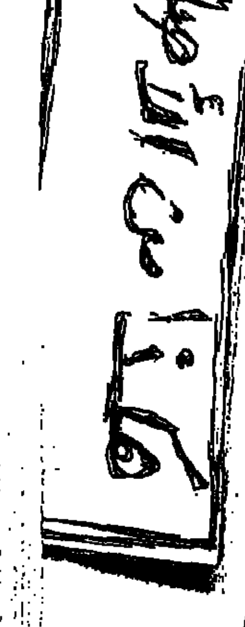
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Legend of the left

Baroness Lestor of Eccles

IN MANY ways Joan Lestor, who has died aged 66, seemed the very personification of the old left in the Labour party she loved so well. Years before the concept of "New" Labour had even been dreamed up, indeed long before Tony Blair was elected to Parliament, Joan Lestor was a member of the party's traditional left wing. In the 1970s Tony Benn was describing her in his diaries as a member of "the old brigade" and she was herself abundantly imbued with many of the best characteristics of those who shared her politics: she was passionate in her beliefs, fiercely committed, loyal and, above all, principled.

She will be remembered for a multitude of reasons, of which political dedication probably tops the list. There were a number of causes which she espoused — her opposition to racism and her fights for the rights of children in particular, but she was also an extraordinarily human person.

Her friends will miss her as much for her loud sense of fashion as her loud sense of fun. She once owned an unevenly striped black and white dress which she was wearing in the chamber of the House of Commons on a day when she was desperate to intervene with a minister. She kept bobbing up and down in her place, and when one of the parliamentary sketch writers described her the next day as looking like a pedestrian crossing travelling at speed she gave a great bellow of laughter as she read it. She had no time for the concept of style guidance when such a thing became fashionable because she thought there were more serious things to worry about. It was what politicians said and did that mattered to her.

She was born the daughter of Charles Lestor, a journalist, actor and politician who was a leading member of the Socialist Party of Great Britain (SPGB), and of his wife, Esther, who had been a textile worker in east London and a shop steward in the Garment Workers' Union when only a teenager. The young Joan was similarly politically precocious, joining initially the SPGB in her teens and then the Labour party in 1955. She had been educated in Wales and London — at the Blaenavon Secondary School, Monmouth, and the William Morris Secondary School in Walthamstow. She went to London university where she obtained a diploma in sociology and qualified as a nursery school teacher.

It was the care and teaching of young children that was the most abiding personal passion of her life, from her first job as an infant teacher in Essex in the 1950s, through owning and running her own day nursery school in south London in the 1960s and then with particular reference to her own two children and grandchildren. But she had the extraordinary good fortune also to be able to relate this interest to her political career, twice serving as a minister at the Department of Education during earlier Labour governments and, more latterly, from 1989-94, as the Shadow Cabinet spokeswoman on children and the family. She resigned from government as junior education minister in 1976 because of cuts in the education budget.

As a teenager she had been married very briefly, but she never repeated the exercise despite her numerous suitors. She very much wanted to have children, however, and won an important victory for single women when she fought successfully for her right to adopt. She wept with joy when she heard that she had won her case, and adopted her son, David, in 1967 and her daughter, Susan, two years later.

She cited "playing with children" as her hobby and boasted proudly in 1997 that she had celebrated the announcement of her peerage by making muffins for her grandchildren.

GIVEN her political inclinations, Lestor would never initially have expected to have ended her political career as a member of the House of Lords. She had first stood for election to public office when she was elected to Wandsworth Borough Council in 1958, where she served for 10 years. She was a member of the old London County Council from 1962-64 and was elected Labour MP for Eton and Slough in 1966. While out of the Commons between 1983 and 1987, before being subsequently re-elected as MP for Eccles, she did various publicly worthy things: she was head of the Lambeth Council Police Unit, worked for the World Development Movement and directed a trade union childcare project. In reality, her absence was only a hiccup. A Tory MP greeted her shortly after she returned, hailing her genially by saying: "Hello Joan. Haven't seen you for ages. Been abroad?"



Joan Lestor . . . Young children were the most abiding personal passion of her life PHOTOGRAPH: GEORGE HERRINGSHAW



She had always travelled as an MP since being a junior Foreign Office minister in 1974-75 with responsibility for Africa. She was known as "The African Queen", and had made herself very unpopular with some of her rightwing government colleagues. It led to the then Foreign Secretary, James Callaghan, asking for her to be switched from the FCO, but overseas affairs and development remained another lifelong interest.

When she happily accepted her elevation to support the new Labour administration's plans to reduce the role of the upper house, it was because her seat in the House of Lords would also continue to provide her with a platform to campaign to secure more money for the underprivileged in undeveloped countries as well as to pursue her causes on the behalf of the world's children.

Her political views did not change greatly in substance over the years, but she did move with the times and became identified with the early stages of the Labour party's reformist left when she joined Neil Kinnock publicly abstaining in the vote when Tony Benn stood as deputy leader in 1981. As a result of that, the following year she was ousted from the National Executive of the Labour party, on which she had served since 1967 and which she had chaired in 1977-78, but she made it back again five years later. She was also voted back on to the Shadow Cabinet. It was a tribute to her widespread popularity. Her last Shadow post before she stood down because of illness in 1996 was as the Labour spokeswoman on overseas aid. It marked the completion of another circle in her career.

Julia Langdon

Joan Lestor, Baroness Lestor of Eccles, politician, born November 13, 1931; died March 27, 1998

An actor for all seasons

Daniel Massey

DANIEL MASSEY, who has died aged 64 of Hodgkin's Disease, was an actor of extraordinary grace, wit and aristocratic charm: a natural high comedy player at home in Shaw, Wilde or Pinero. But he was also capable of sounding tragic depths, as he showed in his unforgettable portrayal of the conductor, Wilhelm Furtwängler, in Ronald Harwood's Taking Sides.

He was born into the theatrical purple. His parents, Raymond Massey and Adrianne Allen, were both distinguished actors and his godfather — and one of the major influences on his life — was Noël Coward.

After Eton and Cambridge, Massey learned the hard realities of theatrical life by going straight into Agatha Christie's Peril At End House in Worthing. But he avoided the slog round the reps and soon found himself in a piece of West End froth, The Happiest Millionaire.

His career took a radically different turn, however, in 1959 when he went to the Theatre Royal, Stratford East, to play in a Monty Norman/David Heneker musical, Make Me An Offer. This was one of the great, unrecognised post-war British musicals, and Massey's light-tenor rendering of "I Want a Lock-up in the Portobello Road" is one of the most fluent and graceful things I have heard on the lyric stage.

Massey was in constant demand in the 1960s, most especially in comedy and musicals. But there was always a feeling that he was capable of sterner stuff, and in the 1970s his range began to widen. It was his work with the national companies over the next two decades that brought the best out of him. He joined the National Theatre in the late seventies, most notably playing John Tanner in Shaw's Man And Superman, for which he won an award.

Massey was always at his peak in Shaw and he returned to the National in 1994 to play General Burgoyne in The Devil's Disciple. He also did much excellent work for the Royal Shakespeare Company in the 1980s and again in 1993 in Ian Judge's revival of Love's Labour's Lost.

By then the illness that dogged him in later years was beginning to give his lean, aquiline features a somewhat ravaged look. But he turned even that to brilliant account in Taking Sides with, in the words of my fellow critic John Peter, "a majestic and magisterial performance".

Massey made many appearances on television, and also pulled off the difficult feat of playing his own godfather in Robert Wise's ill-fated 1968 film, Star!, for which he was nominated for an Oscar.

Throughout his career, Massey was an actor of taste and sensibility. But he also seemed to get better and richer with the years as he came to rely less on his thoroughbred charm and more on his skill at delving into character.

Married three times, first to Adrienne Corri, then to Penelope Wilton and, most recently, to her sister, Lindy, he was an actor of real class and wide range, who bore his final illness with dignity and fortitude.

Michael Billington

Daniel (Raymond) Massey, actor, born October 10, 1933; died March 26, 1998

Driving right down the fast lane

Ferry Porsche

FERRY PORSCHE, who has died aged 88, was given his first proper car — a two-cylinder, 3.5 horsepower job built by his famous father, Ferdinand — as a Christmas present in 1919. He was 10 years old. Ferdinand, eager to see if his beloved son might be a chip off the old block, prepared to show him how to drive. Before he had a chance, the boy dropped the clutch and whizzed off as if he had been driving for years.

Ferry, who was born at the family estate in Wiener-Neustadt, Austria, seemed genetically engineered to design, test, race, develop and sell fast cars. They dominated virtually every moment of his life, save when this reserved man was out hunting, skiing, or fussing over his favourite Airedales and fox terriers. Until his death, he had been an active honorary chairman of the supervisory board of Porsche AG, the world's last major independent maker of sports cars.

Asked on his 85th birthday which was his favourite model, he answered: "The next one." He was never a man to look back. Perhaps this was just as well for, although Ferry created the superbly-engineered, lightweight sports and racing cars — beginning with the 356 in 1948 — which have been associated with the family name ever since, his history was dark and even murky.

He helped his father to develop the Volkswagen and was very close to Hitler. Of Hitler, he was to say: "He was *simpatico* if you knew him personally." So, presumably, was Himmler, who made the young Porsche an honorary SS officer. Living up to this honour, Ferry used thousands of Russian prisoners of war, among other slave labourers, during the second world war to help his father design and build military versions of the Volkswagen, as well as tanks, parts for the V1 "Doodlebug" and other nasties.

Ferry's obsession with engineering seems to have encouraged a detached and even ruthless streak. He analysed the wreckage of a racing car for his father when he was just 12: the death of the driver appeared to have been an unimportant detail. He recorded the number of slave labourers passing through the Porsche works as if so many cogs in a machine.

His reputation, however, rests on the brilliance with which he created the Porsche marque. During the war, he transferred the family workshops from bomb-damaged Stuttgart to the safety of Gmund in Carinthia, Austria. In 1948, he unveiled his masterpiece, the low-slung, jockeyweight 356, the car that has led to today's peerless 911.

Throughout the 1950s, Porsche devoted the company's attention as much to racing as to the production of road cars. Some of the racers, such as the ultra-lightweight 550/550A "Spyder" could be driven on the road; in 1955, James Dean, the actor, killed himself in one.

He continued to turn up at the works twice a week until very recently. His wife Dorothea ("Dodo") died in 1985. He is survived by four sons, Butzi (who designed the 911), Peter, who runs Porsche Design, Wolfgang, an importer of motorbikes into Austria, and Gerhard, a farmer.

Jonathan Glancey

Ferdinand Anton Ernst Porsche, car designer and manufacturer, born September 19, 1909; died March 27, 1998

Letter from Dakar Robert Lacville

Shadow of death

I AM sitting outside the post office in Fann, waiting for the stamp seller. The PO in this smart suburb doesn't open on Saturdays, but a young man sells stamps under the neem tree. He has gone off to find change at the petrol station. Six of us are comfortably waiting for him, enjoying the shade and the sea breeze.

It is getting hotter. By the time I reach Mopti and Djene, temperatures will be firmly in the hundreds.

Beside me sits Mr Diouf, an old soldier who needs 1,300 francs (under $3) for a phone call to tell his family that his daughter has just died in hospital.

He proudly shows me his papers. He served in the French marines and wonders whether I had ever visited the naval base at Toulon? He was wounded, fighting a colonial war in Vietnam and has a bullet wound and small pension to prove it. His natural optimism is dampened today because his daughter has died. He will wait with me for my change and of course I shall give him the money he needs.

A young boy sells me a copy of the Sun newspaper. I am on page three. Le Soleil of Dakar is one of Africa's most famous dailies. No tits and bums here — African journalism has not sunk thus far. Page three is for serious business such as a peace conference I helped to organise. The conference is given two column inches for the opening speech of the foreign minister and one inch for the goodwill message from the head of state.

My 30-minute keynote address on Malian peacemaking gets four lines. I would be the first to admit that the nitty-gritty of making peace does not make exciting journalism. Getting police and customs forces to collaborate across frontiers should help significantly reduce the illegal movements of small arms: but it is better to read the declarations of the national president in favour of peace in our time, and wishing the distinguished delegates success in their important debates.

Still under my tree I check the postcards I am about to send; from Gorée, that beautiful Mediterranean island on Dakar's Atlantic coast. I went there on Sunday. Victoria Albis's gracious villa has been turned into a museum for women. Daughter and temporary wife of French sea captains, La Albis was one of those gorgeous *metisses signares* (from the Portuguese *senhora*) whose beauty and wealth were the stuff of legend.

The museum's elegant veranda looks down on a courtyard where one can still smell the spices. Albis's slaves would have loaded bales of cloth, tusks of ivory, kegs of powder and baskets of gum arabic into the store rooms below, 200 years ago.

Opposite Albis's villa is the house where she used to auction off that other source of her wealth: slaves.

A double staircase sweeps to the master's upper chambers that overlook the ocean. Nothing but sea divides Gorée from the sugar plantations of the Caribbean. Below are the stinking holes in which the master kept his merchandise: on the left, children and virgins, on the right men and women — the latter separate and accessible to keep the sailors happy.

There was a fattening room for men who weighed under 65 kilos, since they needed that weight to have a chance of surviving the ghastly sea journey across the Atlantic in shackles. The curator, Joseph N'Diaye, has turned this house into a slavery museum, a monument to European shame every bit as significant as those of Auschwitz and Dachau.

My change arrives. I offer some to Mr Diouf. Charles de Gaulle was a great man, he tells me. Toulon is a fine city full of ships. Am I certain that I have never been there? Mr Diouf thanks me for the money, and shuffles off sadly to make his phone call.

I hop into a taxi. The driver tells me he needs diesel and holds out his hand for advance payment of the fare. We stop at the filling station opposite the post office.

I am off to meet the French delegation to the peace conference, and I chuckle at how impatient they would be if they had to sit and wait for fuel. What would they have said if they had been forced to wait for change from the stamp seller under that pleasant neem tree?

In their Parisian hurry, they might never have met Mr Diouf. Would they have taken the time to say a quick prayer for his dead daughter? They wouldn't find out anything either about the three wives and numerous children of my taxi driver, Mr Ngom.

I hope at least that they will take the time to visit Gorée, to hear about the commercial rivalry of France, Britain, the Netherlands and Portugal, and to reflect about the European significance of the slave museum.

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

ON THE back of a fruit juice carton, it says "the cranberry is one of the only three fruits native to North America". What are the other two?

WE ALSO noticed this and wrote to the company concerned, who told us that the other two are the blueberry and the Concord grape, which comes from Massachusetts and is often used to make jam. — *Heather Cox, Telford, Shropshire*

CHUCK BERRY. — *John Poole, Chester*

THE fruit-juice company is wrong. The Greengrocer, by Joe Carcione, lists blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, strawberries, wild grapes, wild cherries, cranberries, sloes and other native plums and persimmons, all as native to the United States. The American Heritage Cookbook And Illustrated History Of American Eating & Drinking adds whortleberries, elderberries, mulberries and (in Florida) a wild sour orange. — *Betty Hagglund, Birmingham*

WHY can't we all just love one another?

GRAHAM ANDREWS'S wish to improve the world depends on a falsehood and an impractical ideal (March 22). Our intelligence cannot override what he calls our primal urges. Training can vary how they are expressed; discipline can promote some and demote others; and education can teach knowledge of self and the likely consequences of self-expression. All these can change behaviours. But we are still driven by instincts and, if life arouses them sufficiently, they will take control regardless, or drive us mad.

Nor would we all love one another in a world without hierarchies, in which everyone worshipped universal brotherhood. Hierarchies are needed to defend the higher goods on which individuals depend. And nature has given us instincts that demand competition as well as co-operation, so conflict is inevitable. Without hierarchies, large societies would collapse; and without hate, individuals would be overwhelmed. — *G C A Talbot, Watford, Hertfordshire*

IN WESTERN music, the fundamental major key, the one with no sharps or flats in it, is called "C". Why not "A"?

WESTERN music is anything but consistent in respect to such nomenclature. Take, for instance, the note that comes between our theoretical "A" and "C". "B" (English) is "H" in Germany and "Si" in Italy, which would support the musicians' stance that it is not the name but the sound that counts. — *John Mason, Munich, Germany*

WHY do people find pleasure in popping bubble wrap?

POPPING bubble wrap is an example of the impulse to indulge in life in the microcosm. It provides the elements of exploration (tactile), discovery, resistance, effort, success — with a satisfying sensory reward (auditory) at the end. These elements are found in most healthy human pastimes. — *Robert Frey, Annapolis, Maryland, USA*

Any answers?

HAS anyone ever seriously researched time travel? — *Peter Young, Woodley, Berkshire*

WHERE does the phrase "by a long chalk" come from? — *Grant Ragsdale, Leeds*

WHY is the lion referred to as "the king of the jungle" when it lives in open country? — *Hannah Whitlan, Istanbul, Turkey*

IS THERE a finite number of people in line to the throne of England? If so, who is last? — *Emily Napier, London*

ITALIANS are supposed to speak quickly. Are some languages quicker-spoken than others, and if so, why? — *Lem Sadko, London*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. The Notes & Queries website is at http://nq.guardian.co.uk/



Writer Bruce Sacks with life masks of Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing PHOTO: TREVOR SMITH

Grisly horror treasure saved for Britain

Martin Wainwright

THE British lottery's uncanny ability to pioneer new areas of public funding took a step forward last week, with the $157,000 purchase of blood-drenched Dracula fangs and an intricate contact lens made for Frankenstein's monster.

No public outcry is expected, however, over the purchase of some of the best-loved heritage material currently on the market — as used by Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee when molesting sleepy young ladies in Hammer horror films.

The Hammer archive, including masks and miscellaneous bits of werewolf, was offered for less than its official valuation to the National Museum of Photography, Film and Television in Bradford.

The family of its co-creator Roy Ashton, a gentle soul who sometimes commandeered the kitchen oven to bake rubber heads, was keen for such essentially British items to stay in the country.

"Hammer films have become cult classics," says Michael Harvey, curator of cinematography at the museum, which also houses the world's oldest negatives and one of Britain's two giant Imax screens.

"But the films were produced for minuscule budgets and a considerable part of their success was due to Roy Ashton and his fellow, remarkable make-up artist, Phil Leakey."

The kitchen-table air of some of the gruesome special effects was at one with the feeling, common to some of the best Hammer productions, that scenery might topple over suddenly or a modern car drive into shot.

Suspending disbelief was never a central part of the enjoyable fleapit films package, usually taken before a late-night curry and after several drinks.

The Heritage Lottery Fund, which included the payment in $34 million grants announced last week, says that the boxes of skin, fingernail and not-entirely matching pairs of hands marked Britain's rise to world leadership in the horror make-up field.

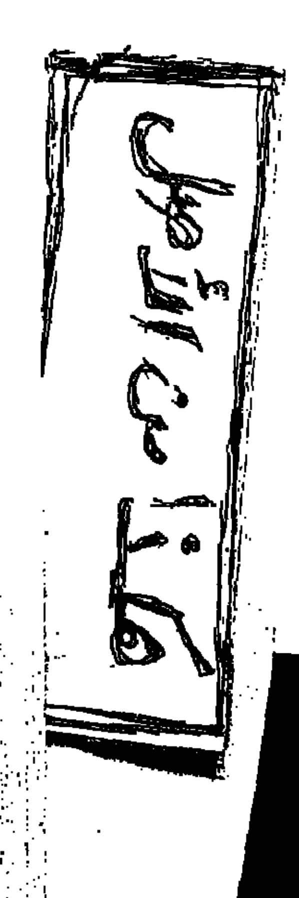
The grisly trove, which also includes painstaking mummy drawings made by the two artists in the British Museum, "will be fully accessible to the public, both in Bradford and on the Internet".

The Heritage Lottery Fund has meanwhile been accused of doing down the North by refusing for a second time to grant-aid the $73 million Imperial War Museum branch earmarked for Trafford in Greater Manchester.

A row broke out after the project beat the Combined Manchester Museums and Galleries, which has lottery backing, to matching funding from Europe. Both projects need lottery as well as European funding to proceed.

Councillor David Ashton, leader of Trafford council, says: "This is an outrageous snub to the whole of the North of England. They may think it's over, but it isn't."

Lord Rothschild, head of the Heritage Lottery Fund, says that the priority was strengthening existing museums and the fund could not afford to allocate $27 million — a third of its museums budget — to a new project.



Making art out of martyrdom

THEATRE
Michael Billington

WE HAVE had plays about Oscar Wilde's trials, his politics, his life and his wife. Now comes David Hare's **The Judas Kiss**, presented by the Almeida at the Playhouse in London, which avoids the biographical slog to focus on two key episodes in Wilde's life. But, while it is sensitively written and directed, it suffers from a monochrome performance from Liam Neeson as the saintly Oscar.

Hare pinpoints two pivotal moments in the Wilde tragedy. The first is at the Cadogan Hotel in 1895 when Wilde, after the collapse of the action against Lord Queensberry, rejects the option of flight to await inevitable arrest. The second is at Naples in 1897 when Wilde, after his release from jail, fatally resumes his relationship with Bosie, ensuring both ostracism and penury. The key question in both cases is what prompted an act of self-destruction.

Hare's answer, in the first, less compelling act, is not that different from Ellmann's in his classic biography: that Wilde was both the spectator of his own tragedy and determined not to yield to the pressures of a hypocritical society. But, in the fascinating second half, Hare implies that Wilde, while seeing Bosie's potential for betrayal, was hypnotised both by the illusory nature of life and the prospect of martyrdom. If he is a portly Hamlet in the first half, he becomes a secular Christ in the second.

It is a persuasive reading and shows Hare, like all writers, creating his own Wilde; a romantic individualist consciously turning his life into a work of art. And the second-act Wilde, an immobilised hulk in carpet slippers who looks, in his own words, "like a senior pederastic Anglican bishop", becomes an authentically tragic, twilit figure awaiting his inevitable end.

But Neeson carries only partial conviction. He has the height and bulk for Wilde but, in the first act, when the hero is affecting aloof indifference to his destiny, he conveys a restless agitation. He is much better in the second, but one still longs for him to colour and point a phrase.

Richard Eyre's production brings out the aching romanticism of the second act, aided by Mark Henderson's winter-sun lighting and Bob Crowley's set, in which the Neapolitan squalor is offset by the bay's twinkling lights. Tom Hollander also portrays Bosie as a shallow emotional traitor and Peter Capaldi induces sympathy for Robert Ross as the eternal go-between. What the evening confirms is Wilde's Hamletesque status, in that each writer creates him afresh according to his own needs and desires.

For **After the Orgy** at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall, we enter the venue to discover a tacky erotic film being projected, full of grunts, groans, meshing of limbs and sucking of fingers. But it says something about the anaphrodisiac quality of this production by the Swansea-based experimental company, Volcano, that after 80 minutes all lubricious thoughts have been banished.

Despite the come-on title, this is not really a show about sex. Inspired by the ideas of Nietzsche and Baudrillard, it is more concerned with pre-millennial exhaustion than post-coital fatigue. It implies that we are at the end of history, that reason and progress have failed us and that, in the words of Baudrillard, "the information culture is collapsing beneath the excess of information".

All this is a pretty heavy agenda to get through in a show boasting two performers, a go-go dancer, three musicians and a bank of video screens. And my feeling is that, on this occasion, Volcano has achieved only a minor eruption. In the past their brand of physical theatre has been given a strong intellectual spine by reference to Shakespeare's sonnets, Ibsen's plays or reportage of war. But here the apocalyptic ideas and *fin de siècle* despair are not attached to anything more substantial than a fictive exploration of a man-woman relationship.

The two performers, Juan Carrascoso and Gill Lyon, whirl, gyrate, pose as archetypal lovers including Tristan and Isolde, and offer separate camcorder monologues about male and female identity. He tells us that his ideal woman is like his ideal city: "hot with good architecture". She, asked to name the most insensitive part of the penis, replies: "The man." But all this sits uneasily with the gloomy prognosis about the decay of civilisation: if the world is going up in smoke you don't worry about a blaze in the kitchen.

If the show, directed by Paul Davies and Fern Smith, gets any point across it is that our culture is plagued by information excess. Here that is neatly symbolised by the mixture of live action, music, video and film so that, even as the performers are holding the mirror up to Nietzsche, we are being bombarded with images of a substantial lady proving Philip Larkin's point that sex is much too wonderful to share with anybody else.

But the production, with its mix of the cerebral and the physical, left me bemused rather than enlightened. As one of the performers remarks: "There is something ridiculous about explaining things." On this occasion, I'd drink to that.

Strangely familiar

A hundred years after the birth of Magritte, his work still has the power to shock. **Adrian Searle** on a master of the surreal

THIN rain falling in Brussels, through a sky cluttered with rocks, yesterday's loaves and bowler-hatted men. On the balconies, the women sit in their coffins and watch the world go by. Behind the curtained windows, the trains are running on time in the fire-place. And in the café, conversation is confounded by floating seashells, a jug, a sponge, a pretty blue bow and a lemon. The tuba's caught fire again and no one looks surprised. I order a bottle of wine and a plate of ham. The ham stares back at me with its one unblinking eye. Over in the corner a man is staring fixedly at the wall. It's René Magritte, sitting in the bar in the mid-1920s, having an epiphany over a glass of Belgian beer, undergoing, as he put it later, "a prolonged contemplative experience . . . in an unpretentious Brussels brasserie: I was in a frame of mind such that the mouldings on a door seemed to me to be imbued with a mysterious quality of existence and for a long time I stayed in contact with their reality".

Having gone through an apprenticeship of journeyman portraiture, belated Futurism and underwhelming abstractions, Magritte found his subject, and his way.

The world is indeed mysterious, and sometimes our apprehension of it takes on a strangeness and weight that is inexplicable. You don't need a surfeit of Belgian beer, or drugs, for the world to unhinge itself before you. You don't have to be disturbed for the world to become disturbing, for the ordinary to leap up and bite you. You don't even have to be in Belgium. It can happen anywhere. But the strangeness of the world, the enigma of being, does not usually manifest itself in overtly aberrant visions. It is all already there, in the everyday, in the curtain's shadow, the passing clouds, sunlight on a brick wall, the objects on the table, in a glimpse of a white tablecloth on a table in an empty room. The surreal is always with us. Surrealism, like Freudianism, simply discovered what was already there, a world in waiting, a world of inexplicable disclosures.

Some artists, and their work, become ubiquitous. Like the Mona Lisa, like a Picasso woman with her eye on her cheek or a Dali melting watch, Magritte's work has become part of the furniture of the modern mind, however indifferent that mind might be to works of art. His work stands for the mystery of things, and gives form and names to the nameless. When people respond to Magritte as a kind of fantastical revelation, as psychic entertainment, they miss his true strength. It is when he gives form to what we felt all along, but didn't have a name for, or didn't truly recognise in ourselves and our experience, that his real strength and originality reveals itself.

Almost everyone knows Magritte's work, even if they have never been in an art gallery. Magritte's impassive, imperturbable enigmas have become common currency. Magritte's juxtapositions, his artful displacements and contradictions provide the model for innumerable ad campaigns, and his paintings have ended up on countless book covers and record sleeves, from the neurological ruminations of Oliver Sacks to the album covers of Led Zeppelin.

The reasons are not hard to fathom. Not only are Magritte's images arresting — the inflammable tuba, the huge green apple filling the living room, a castle-capped rock afloat in the sky — but they are also immediately readable and deceptively accessible. Magritte's paintings provide us with both the comfort of naturalistic, conventional representations of people and things, and with the shock, the frisson, of the unreal and the enigmatic. This is Magritte's charm, and the key to his popularity. His images are both accessible and strange: Magritte hands enigma to us, along with the one-eyed ham, on a plate.

This year marks the centenary of the artist's birth. A commemorative retrospective of his work opened last month in Brussels, where Magritte spent most of his working life. The show is compendious, covering every aspect of his work.



The Rape (1934) . . . Magritte's shocks are delivered with an unemotional calm; it is this calm that lingers in the mind

Here are his early portraits and lurid abstractions. Here his commercial wallpaper designs, the posters for concerts, the sheet music illustrations and other commercial commissions he continued to undertake till late on in his career. Here are his letters, postcards, his illustrations for Lautrement and De Sade, his Surrealist objects and his home movies. And here are 300 paintings and gouaches, covering the artist's entire career, up to his death in 1967.

But too much Surrealism is wearing. After the first couple of rooms of the retrospective, the surprise and shock of his work begin to come as no surprise at all. The haunting ceases to haunt.

A man walks beside me, stopping every so often before an image. He stands in front of a painting of an ordinary window that looks out on to an ordinary landscape. The window pane has been smashed, and the shards of glass that have fallen into the room retain the shattered image of a green field, the blue sky and a clump of trees. The man guffaws, moves on to the next painting, and guffaws again. Is this all there is, I ask myself, this mild amusement at Magritte's conundrums and contradictions? What has happened to the strangeness, the weirdness of Magritte's world?

It has become hard to look at Magritte with fresh eyes. Hard to be astonished, harder still to be unsettled. There is something too arch about many of his paintings, too mechanical and (with hindsight) too strained for them to be altogether arresting. Oddly, although most of Magritte's poetic, surreal imagery leave me unmoved, the idea of them spawns a world of further images in my brain. Recognition of the paintings themselves is only the starting point.

It is the idea of Magritte that remains, for me, compelling: the careful, edited naturalism of his depictions, in which the world is rendered with a matter-of-fact plainness and in which the shocks are delivered with an unemotional calm. It is the calm with which he paints things that lingers and grows in the mind — not the feet that have metamorphosed into shoes, not the fact that a dress hanging in the cupboard has breasts or that men stroll in the sky.

Magritte remains important for his plays on representation, his game with things and their names. The paintings that mix words and images, things and the names of things, seem far more poetic than those in which spectacular apparitions are conjured before us.

Magritte's continuing importance is in his game with the language of representation. A man walks away from us in an indeterminate space. Black, lumpen forms litter his way. They are labelled with the names of things — *horizon, cheval, nuage* — yet the lumps are not yet the things they are called on to represent. They remain formless, the possibility of a world of objects. It's a world on the edge of existence, either about to come into being or a world declining into formlessness. A world, as it were, on the tip of the artist's tongue. Magritte's articulations of the inarticulated are a kind of modern, lapsed sublime.

At his best, Magritte was superb and superbly disturbing. But perhaps, in his most famous images, in the stereotypical Magritte that everyone knows. The popular Magritte is the lesser artist than Magritte at his most furtive and least spectacular. Something slick intermittently entered his work and diminished him. But his importance remains in a kind of atmosphere, of time suspended, interminable waiting, emptiness, a sort of grief at the world's indifference.

At the Museum of Ancient Art, Royal Museums of Fine Art of Belgium, Brussels, until June 28

The clone ranger

CD REVIEW
Steven Poole

MICHAEL NYMAN, composer for The Piano and Peter Greenaway's films, gets hired to write a film score when the director wants a decorous, cerebral backdrop for high-concept images. Given that Gattaca is a movie about genetic manipulation, for this orchestral soundtrack (on Virgin) he has cloned most of his favourite tricks.

The most obvious is with us from the first piece, "The Morrow". It's a relentless thickening of texture — strings joined by wind, brass, and chugging piano — over a short, stately chord progression. Almost subliminally, the bass starts sawing away, then the woodwinds hoot along, while the fragments of melody in the violins finally coalesce into neo-romantic, yearning shapes.

This can work beautifully, and Nyman pulls it off again on half a dozen tunes: noticeably, towards the end, when he has more space to build an emotional argument.

But the method has its madnesses, too. The dark chocolate string textures that Nyman is capable of can be spoiled by his chucking everything in on top: the sound ends up grey and doughy. Occasionally a beam of light cuts through the mush with a squealing solo violin or wailing soprano saxophone, but this is a rare pleasure. That chugging piano gets annoying, too: banging away as if it's escaped from an Elton John ballad, and mixed far too high.

Even hardcore Nyman fans won't get much fun from a lot of the middle tracks, full of sub-Herrman dissonances. More adventurous is the charming theme introduced in "Not The Only One" and recapitulated in the grandiose finales, a splendid melody on solo French horn whose first four notes are exactly the same as the Star Trek theme music.

Once you get past that, though, it effectively conjures up inspirational images of a genetically enhanced but melancholy stallion galloping across futuristic prairies. And isn't that Michael Nyman himself in the saddle, happy to have put behind him once again the limitations of working to a picture, riding off into the musical sunset?

Nyman: genetically enhanced



Ring pull . . . Danny Nussbaum and Bob Hoskins in Shane Meadows's TwentyFourSeven

Fighting back off the ropes

CINEMA
Richard Williams

IN THE same week as Hollywood's ritual celebration of studio muscle, came an outstanding film whose budget would barely have paid for Titanic's launch party. Shane Meadows's **TwentyFourSeven**, funded by BBC Films to the tune of a mere $2.5 million (half the cost of The Full Monty), arrives on a tide of warm advance notices, prizes at foreign festivals, and a nomination for Bafta's British film of the year award. Without a shadow of doubt, it signifies the arrival of a gifted individual. And it may also introduce a new way of making movies, or at least of making movie-makers.

Meadows is in his mid-20s, a drop-out from school and college who arrived at his vocation by a sort of divine accident. TwentyFourSeven is his first feature film, made after a brief apprenticeship involving a borrowed video camera, 25 short films and one "featurette", the splendid 60-minute Small Time. The key to the success of his early work was the feeling that the director belonged to the world he portrayed.

With his first full-scale film, Meadows faced the challenge of transferring that sense of integrity to the big screen. TwentyFourSeven is located in Nottingham, the same setting as Small Time, but the cheap colour and erratic pacing that characterised the earlier effort are replaced in the new film by a technical assurance that gives a very different look to the world of junk food, soft drugs, casual violence and aimless kickabouts on scruffy recreation grounds.

Most obviously, TwentyFourSeven boasts a mainstream movie star in Bob Hoskins, made to measure for the role of Alan Darcy, a man of no visible occupation and few attachments, who decides to restore a sense of purpose and identity to the local youth by reviving the boxing club of his own adolescence. As a pocket bruiser with a sentimental streak, Darcy goes through the standard routine of cajoling the local gang members into joining up.

Like Jim Sheridan's The Boxer, TwentyFourSeven suffers from the over-familiarity of this setting. But it suits the film's real concern, which is male aggression.

From his young actors, notably Danny Nussbaum, Mat Hand, Johann Myers, Karl Collins and James Hooton, Meadows's informal methods draw performances that vividly reflect the ruinous combination of lethargy and violence emerging from the death of the old culture of jobs and families.

Meadows's decision to shoot the film in black and white allows Ashley Rowe, his director of photography, to create rich textures that evoke the work of Robby Müller in the films of Wenders and Jarmusch.

Almost 40 years ago, in the same city, Albert Finney's young factory worker cursed the destiny to which he was condemned at the conclusion of Karel Reisz's Saturday Night And Sunday Morning, one of the key films of post-war British realist cinema. I suppose the boys of TwentyFourSeven, shaped by the deceptions and betrayals of the housing-estate society, are in effect Finney's grandchildren. And maybe, just maybe, Shane Meadows is the heir to the art.

A hundred years after the invention of cinema, it's still possible to find new things to do. The proof is to be seen in Alexander Sokurov's **Mother and Son**, a film like no other.

In a house in the remote countryside, an old woman (played by Gudrun Geyer) is dying. Her son (Alexei Ananishnov) is attending her final hours. They are alone. He strokes her cheek, combs her hair, feeds her from a baby's bottle, administers her injections, reads aloud from old postcards. Then he picks her up and carries her for the last time along familiar lanes. Soon after their return, she dies.

All this takes 73 minutes, almost entirely free of dialogue. The pace is slow to the point of near inertia, but the senses are occupied to the maximum. Each tiny sound, each minute gesture, is registered as if by some astonishingly sensitive emotional seismograph.

Sokurov has composed a cinematic poem of remarkable purity and spiritual intensity. Pure, that is, but not artless. Figures are distorted. The landscape blurs. The light changes constantly. When the wind ruffles a field of long grass, it looks like a watercolour left in a puddle, disturbed by a gentle ripple.

Sokurov's approach involves the enhancement of nature. He paints on glass screens and places them in front of the camera, preparing and positioning them with such care that the viewer is never aware of the intervention. "Painterly" is the obvious description of the result.

Mother And Son is one of those rare cinema experiences that make the real world, when you re-enter it, appear weirdly artificial.

The world of André Téchiné's **Les Voleurs** seems all too real, long after the film is over. Like its predecessor, Ma Saison Préferée, Téchiné's latest offers the team of Catherine Deneuve and Daniel Auteuil, and no comfort for them or their audience. "We were united by a feeling of mutual contempt," one character says of another, summing up the emotional climate.

Auteuil plays Alex, a detective. His brother, a garage proprietor mixed up in a stolen-car racket, has just been killed. The brother's gang includes a young man whose wayward sister Juliette (Laurence Côte) is having two concurrent affairs. One, strictly physical, is with Alex. The other, both physical and spiritual, is with Marie (Deneuve), a philosophy professor.

Téchiné takes the risk of showing us the story through various eyes. Deneuve takes the risk of showing her age, and then some; but her scene in the bath with Juliette is an affectionate contrast to the harsh complexity of the girl's encounters with Alex. And Auteuil takes the risk of seeming unsympathetic; he is, as usual, extraordinary in a tough, absorbing whodunit of the emotions.

Springer is sprung

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

IT WAS jolly kind of the BBC. **Ruby Wax Meets the Jerry Springer Show** (BBC1) was virtually a trailer for The Jerry Springer Show, which started on ITV the next day.

Springer is an American politician who went into TV after a spot of bother with a hooker and made his fortune with a freak show.

ITV has chosen some of the milder stuff (Mom Acts Like A Teenager . . . Abandoned At The Altar . . . My Mom Dresses Too Sexy) for its daytime viewing. But on the BBC we saw My Sister Slept With My Three Husbands. Stringer introduced Tammy and Angie and stepped back rather smartly. Tammy began: "You're so full of shit . . ." Without one word, Angie whacked her in the mouth. This is the normal response on a Springer show. His guests have the reactions of coiled cobras.

Springer thinks a show has failed if his guests do not brain each other with their chairs. It was, perhaps, asking for trouble to include a table of chuckable food in Holiday Hell With My Feuding Family. But that's what Springer does. Asks for trouble.

The audience, most of them overweight and some with moustaches, seemed to be understudies for the show. If a guest chickened out, a colourful substitute could quickly be located in the front row.

Ruby was soon on chatting terms with a divorcee in the audience. Ruby would soon be on chatting terms with a corpse.

"You ran him over and he didn't die?" "No, he got back up. I reversed and hit him again. He got back up. I reversed and hit him again. He was flying through the air and he said, 'Can you give me a ride to the ambulance?' I said, 'Damn right! Stand in front of the car again!' And he did."

The theme of the show was Something I Haven't Told My Boyfriend. Tatiana and La Tasha were tall, willowy black girls. If they were born Tatiana and La Tasha, my name's Annoushka. They weren't, as it happens, even born girls. That was something they hadn't told their boyfriends. La Tasha's boyfriend was a pleasant looking lad in spectacles. She began: "I hope you won't get mad . . ." As futile a hope as ever I heard hoped. He sprang like a cougar for her throat. The audience were on their feet, screaming with delight. Bouncers bounced in and picked people out of each other's hair.

Backstage, the guests, all passion spent, looked post-coital and, where physically possible, pale. Ruby fussed about, trying to kiss it better ("Let's have a group hug") and to mend matters ("I'm just trying to make it end happy").

But that is not what Springer is about at all. If it ain't broke, he breaks it.

The interminable twaddle of ITV's **Midsomer Murders** ("So! Gerald Hadleigh was a transvestite!") was nearly redeemed by its big finish. Brandishing a carving knife, Anna Massey chased Joanna David through the lightning-lit corridors of her stately home before plunging to her death from the window of her mummified brother's bedroom.

Hello, hello! Are you still with me? If a murder has a cast of stars, the biggest did it. That's simple astronomy. DCI Barnaby (John Nettles), however, was so slow on the uptake that it took him two hours to notice that Massey was so batty you could hang bells in her. Or even realise that he was allergic to cats.

A very naughty boy

Richard Boston

Aubrey Beardsley
by Stephen Calloway
V&A Publications 224pp £25

Aubrey Beardsley: A Biography
by Matthew Sturgis
HarperCollins 404pp £19.99

SEX and Beardsley go together like hammer and tongs. No other artist is so closely associated with the subject. Beardsley's private behaviour did little to deserve this, his post-adolescent physical activities being restricted by his appalling ill-health, which he endured with enormous courage. He was, however, in the Oscar Wilde set, and when headlines blared out the news that Wilde had been arrested with a copy of the Yellow Book in his hand there was ample evidence to ensure a verdict of guilt by association.

Beardsley referred to himself as the "solitaire", but W B Yeats records bumping into him with a prostitute known as Penny Plain, and describes Beardsley staring at himself in a mirror muttering "Yes, yes. I look like a Sodomite", adding, according to Yeats, "but no, I am not that".

Stephen Calloway hands down an open verdict: "Since so little irrefutable evidence has ever come to light, it remains all but impossible to make precise statements about Beardsley's real sexual predilections or his fantasies, about the extent to which his obviously highly developed interests remained theoretical, or were ever explored, and about the ways in which these aspects of his character find true images in his art . . . The simple truth may well be that Beardsley's natural instincts were fairly straightforwardly heterosexual." Modern biographers are routinely berated for their prurient interest in the sex lives of their subjects. Usually the hypocrite lecteur, having first sated on the juicy bits, stresses that it is the work that really demands our attention, but in Beardsley's work every line is replete with sex. It cannot and should not be ignored.

Like Van Gogh, Toulouse-Lautrec and many artists of the time, Beardsley learned an enormous amount from the Japanese about the use of line, composition and large areas of flat colour.

William Rothenstein gave Beardsley a collection of erotic woodcuts by Kitagawa Utamaro (1735-1806). Rothenstein was shocked to find that Beardsley had framed and hung them on his walls, thereby confirming his status as an *enfant terrible* of the London art world. The Utamaro in Calloway's book shows male and female sexual organs in a way that is startlingly explicit because it is still so rare.

In his Lysistrata drawings (very privately printed), with little as precedent other than Greek vases and Japanese woodcuts, Beardsley drew erect penises without the crudity, smuttiness, voyeurism or exhibitionism of the lavatory muralist. What is more (and, to many, most offensive), they are very funny without being at all sniggering. Sex is funny, the penis is very funny, and the erect penis is hilarious.

Rapidly developing from the unpromising starting point of Kate Greenaway (who hated Beardsley's work) and Burne-Jones, working as a clerk in an insurance office and with minimal formal training, this astoundingly precocious life-long invalid developed a way of drawing as individual and as odd as those of Blake or Edward Lear.

He produced posters as striking as those of Lautrec, Steinlen or Cassandre, and delicate art nouveau work to compare with Mucha or Erté, as well as the erotic illustrations for Pope's The Rape Of The Lock, Wilde's Salome and Aristophanes. He was the creative force behind the Yellow Book and the Savoy, as well as making himself a prominent place in the history of dandyism.

He was caricatured endlessly in Punch, and was the subject of music-hall songs, achieving personal notoriety in a society that included not only Wilde but also such different figures as Frank Harris, Yeats and Max Beerbohm, the last of whom described himself as belonging to "the Beardsley period". It was an amazing amount to achieve by the age of 25.

These two books are timed to coincide with the centenary of Beardsley's death. Sturgis provides masses of biographical detail (perhaps more than enough for most of us), but is particularly good on the Yellow Book. Calloway is more succinct and the illustrations are much better, with examples of the work of other artists, from Utamaro to William Nicholson which set Beardsley in his historical context: well worth the extra fiver.


A decadent concoction . . . Aubrey Beardsley's Isolde, 1895 (detail)

To order Aubrey Beardsley: A Biography at £17 and Aubrey Beardsley at £21 please contact CultureShop (see ad below)

One steppe beyond

Alex Ivanovitch

The Spirit-Wrestlers
by Philip Marsden
HarperCollins £17.99 250pp

HOW does one write a travel book? How does Philip Marsden write his? The opening chapter of The Spirit-Wrestlers tells us — put crudely, you pick an interesting timely part of the world, research it thoroughly, buy a one-way ticket and for the next six-odd months talk to as many foreigners as you can, writing up your notes in the evenings.

Of course there are all sorts of travel projects — travel as liberation, education, penance or punishment, commemorative journeys, retracings of all sorts, articulated voyages, voyages with an acknowledged terminus and those brought arbitrarily to a full stop. Marsden's area of interest is post-Soviet eastern Europe, previous books having taken him to Poland and Armenia. This new, slight and engaging book (one almost wants to say novel: it is certainly novelistic) describes a trip to the southern borders of the old Soviet Union, the area that includes Ukraine to the west, and further east and further down the new republics such as Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Marsden tells us, rather nicely, that he is "aiming for the dissenters and misfits of the Russian fringe", and, as planned, he gets to meet and talk to all sorts of latter-day Cossacks and weird religious sectarians who have a home in the south. But what's really seductive about this book is not its sense of being in at the end of something important, nor the battery of "characters" that it assembles, but rather Marsden's own lovely errancy, the kind of Brownian motion that tosses him from collision to collision (and this is his project, over and above the desire to gather information).

The sticky sentences that lodge in us are not the ones that describe what Marsden sees on his way (some of these are admittedly quite good) but rather those that record a change of direction or pace, a sovereign intention to tack off on a different course or to stay put for a few days. Each of these is of the form "I decided then to . . .", though it's not always written like this. At the end of the opening chapter, for example, Marsden breezily throws himself into his journey, telling us that he bought "in advance a one-way ticket to Rostov-on-Don"; and this sentence ravishes partly because we know that, in fact, it records what happened.

Independent and mobile, Marsden sustains just the barest of relations with the people he meets. To be sure, he talks to strangers much more often than your average tourist and gets invited back for food and a bed for the night an almost unbelievable number of times — no doubt he's a charming guest, and, of course, oppressed communities all over the world make a virtue of hospitality. But no sooner does he coax out a story, a memory or a scene than he moves off again, pursuing a friend of a friend, a recommendation, or following up a lead. These brief encounters remind one (inescapably) of casual sex, and the summer spent on the southern steppe and in the Caucasus is a kind of very discreet saturnalia during which people and places are grazed with the tips of the fingers and then abandoned.

We soon realise that Marsden has one important thing in common with the people he meets over and over again: he, like them, is a traveller. So many of these Russians and not-quite Russians tell of being shunted around the country during the thirties and forties, either as punishment or in efforts to populate empty areas; and it's not just the scale of these forced migrations that amazes but their routineness. Naturally, Stalin's name crops up repeatedly, and Marsden even meets a man who claims to be Stalin's cousin. Perhaps he is, or was, but given that most of the other Russians our author meets show an extraordinary ability to believe the strangest things we may be forgiven for feeling a bit sceptical.

Of course, most of the people Marsden has chosen to come across are embattled, impassioned sectarians who have made an absolute point of believing the oddest things. The Spirit-Wrestlers of the title are one of these sects of misfits who grittily survived years of persecution and who are now, in common with other similar groups, building or rebuilding churches. The Cossacks we meet are another group that are experiencing a renascence, but they are having problems of identity that don't seem to be affecting the Old Believers.

It's touching and embarrassing to read of Marsden's common experience with these men, who independently almost all end up reaching for their Cossack uniform and parading privately for him in it. This is true transvestism, in which costume doesn't just go towards making an identity, it defines it utterly — these old men (they are mostly old) with their magnificent moustaches are not even belated, they are ersatz.

Paperbacks
Nicholas Lezard

The Elgin Marbles: Should They Be Returned to Greece?, by Christopher Hitchens, Robert Browning and Graham Binns (Verso, £11)

AN UPDATED version of the 1987 tract, whose relevance is compounded by its final suggestion that 2001, being the duocentenary of Elgin's expedition to the Acropolis, would be a fine date to give them back. The bulk of the work is Hitchens's, and you do not have to be the kind of fawning idolater of his work that I am to imagine the thoroughness, passion and integrity of his case. Every objection to the marbles' return is examined and blown apart. Hitchens has, elsewhere, the tendency to produce his arguments with an almost sadistic flourish, guaranteed not so much to make his opponents change their minds as vex them to apoplexy; but here he is measured, calm, unanswerable. A lesson in history and morality for us all.

The End of Science, by John Horgan (Abacus, £8.99)

JOHN HORGAN turned to science writing after a "crisis of faith" suffered while reading his nth interpretation of Ulysses: science's goals seemed so much crisper, less messy and more "correct" than literary criticism's. (A feeble reason, but we'll let that pass.) Anyway, you can take the boy out of lit crit but you can't take the lit crit out of the boy and he began to realise that various eminent scientists were coming up against the barriers of their disciplines and reacting in a way that seemed as speculative and contingent as an artist's. Horgan visits and interviews those scientists at the cutting edges of cosmology, chaology, evolutionary biology: those who think they hover on the brink of The Answer To Life, The Universe, And Everything, such as E O Wilson, Francis Crick, Stephen Jay Gould and Kuhn. Horgan makes them human, and their ideas, or the outlines thereof, understandable, even Frank Tipler's supremely wacky Omega Point theory, which resurrects us at the end of time for an eternity of bliss. Or something.

Days in the Life: Voices from the English Underground 1961-1971, edited by Jonathon Green (Pimlico, £12.50)

FIRST published in 1988, during the High Gloom of Thatcherism (and Green's new preface includes a splendid fart in the general direction of priggish, pious New Labour), this is a riveting, insightful, often side-splitting oral history of the sixties. Green's idea was simply to ask 100 key and marginal sixties people to reminisce, and then put the resulting memories into thematically ordered chunks. Those who are worried that this sounds like a recipe for epic boredom can be reassured. John Peel couldn't be boring if he tried; and neither can Martin Cropper (disastrous drug stories), John Hopkins, Peter Shertser, and particularly Felix Dennis, the Oz Trial defendant described by Mr Justice Argyle as "the least intelligent of the three [defendants]", now a millionaire, and bully for him. The story Dennis tells about Germaine Greer begins: "I have an awful lot of respect for Germaine and I'm sure she'll kill me for this story but it is absolutely true." Read it and gasp.

Voice of history

W L Webb

Alexander Solzhenitsyn:
A Century in His Life
by D M Thomas
Little, Brown 583pp £22.50

SOMEWHERE in her great biography of her murdered poet-husband, Nadezhda Mandelstam quotes a 19th century sage to the effect that "Russia exists to teach the rest of the world a lesson". Whatever Freudian glosses one adds to his motivation, there is no doubt what chiefly drove Alexander Solzhenitsyn to produce his vast testament to the Stalin chapter of that lesson: it was that mankind, and Russian posterity in particular, should not be allowed to forget the millions of lives wasted and broken, like Osip Mandelstam's, in the nightmare anti-world of the camps.

This heroic task was heroically accomplished, at great cost to others besides its author, in the teeth of an oppressive totalitarian system the more problematic because, unlike Nazi barbarism, its twisted roots had originally grown in the soil of European humanism. The light his "bitter books" (Lydia Chukovskaya's phrase) shed on the Siberian darkness and the dark soul of Soviet communism was an illumination not just for his own people, but for those across the world who needed to unmask their local brands of inhumanity.

To hear now that well-brought-up young Russians are giggling over The Gulag Archipelago, when they open it at all, only adds to an uneasy feeling that we've lately been putting ourselves in the way of earning another of history's "lessons".

The real merit of D M Thomas's sometimes wayward and irritating new biography, written in conspicuously unheroic times, is that through all the difficulties of Solzhenitsyn's personality, politics and writing, his achievement remains clear. Thomas's best stroke comes rather late, at the beginning of the end, when Solzhenitsyn returns from exile by train. As he looks out at the evening murk, Thomas thinks he must have had in his mind's eye the face of that other returned exile, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, and conjures them — "Lenin and Solzhenitsyn, staring cold-eyed at each other across the corpse-filled gorge of the 20th century".

Thomas is not the first to see these two, implacably opposed ideologically, as 20th century Russian "doubles": the temperamental similarities became almost a truism among Russians closest to him. There was the same "almost brutally insistent energy"; the relentless, driving work and the demands it made on the women in their lives; the same suspicion, short temper, and brilliant conspiratorial gifts; and the absolute conviction in the historical necessity of their projects.

But then, writes Thomas, reflecting on the energies Solzhenitsyn needed to survive cancer and the camps and then become, in The Gulag Archipelago, their recording-avenging angel, "had he been gentle, friendly, 'nice', like Sakharov, he could never have written it".

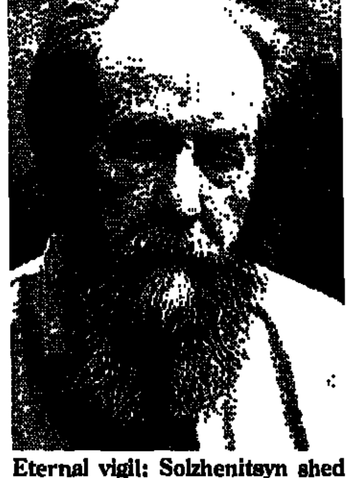
The double image fixes them both as avatars of an age that is no longer ours: of that short 20th century already left behind, receding at speed, especially for the children of the Brave New World Order.

It also reminds us that Solzhenitsyn was a Soviet Russian, "October's twin", rather as Salman Rushdie is one of Midnight's Children, but more determiningly for his way of seeing. The adolescent Solzhenitsyn was an ardent Leninist and as an officer at the front he could still write to his young wife before his arrest, "I would gladly give my life for Lenin". Such Young Believers may well have felt even more woundingly betrayed than the Old Bolsheviks when Stalinist reality came knocking on their door, though Thomas's psychologising is persuasive for once when he suggests earlier origins of the sustained force of Solzhenitsyn's outrage.

An only child, born six months after his father's death in a hunting accident, his mother refused to remarry in order to devote herself to him, and in spite of the comparative poverty which meant that they shared a one-room shack during his puberty, he has shown throughout his life the marks of a particularly imperious infancy. There are reports of a childhood feeling, when illness kept him from school and school friends, "that if he wasn't there, they somehow ceased to exist".

THIS king-sized ego with a will to match helped him survive, but the sympathetic though not uncritical attention Thomas pays to the evidence of the author's first wife, Natalya Reshetovskaya, shows clearly how it affected his relationships with women. Much of this is painful, some of it outrageous ("How dare she do this to me!" was his reported reaction when Natalya attempted suicide after he had written to say his mistress was pregnant), though not as sensational as the hyping fuss about Solzhenitsyn's disapproval might suggest.

Thomas is right to point to his striking gift for metaphor— think only of the ancient salamander deep in the ice at the opening of The Gulag Archipelago. And in the prison camp chronicles, where he confronts all that bitter history as Thomas imagines him confronting Lenin, in cold, implacable anger, without benefit of irony or black comedy beyond what life provided, the uniquely harsh, witnessing voice sometimes sounds still like the voice of history itself.


Eternal vigil: Solzhenitsyn shed light on darkness

Saved by the book

Katharine Viner

Once in a House on Fire
by Andrea Ashworth
Picador 332pp £14.99

THIS is a story of a childhood, and it is a childhood of pain. Andrea Ashworth's father died when she was five, drowned in four inches of water with her photograph in his pocket; two stepfathers, one after the other, beat her, her mother and her sisters, Laurie and Sarah, in their working-class Manchester home. The men battered her mother so that her face was always cracked and blue, and yet she was lost without them; they beat her daughters for answering back or for reading "posh books" like Jane Eyre. And yet Ashworth was saved, not by therapy or love or religion but by Literature "with a capital L"; she went to Oxford, became a well-spoken don and lived happily. This survival underpins the book.

The child's world as Ashworth lived it was a world defined by domestic violence; by men who hospitalise the woman they say they love, by children convinced their parents will kill each other, by police who give the abuser a wink and send him straight back home. But children in violent homes, vulnerable and desperate to be loved, often have complex feelings towards their parents, as Ashworth ably demonstrates.

So although she wants her mother's beatings to stop, there is some comfort in their familiarity. When the second stepfather leaves, writes Ashworth, "half of me was as excited as Laurie and Sarah at the prospect of having our mother safely to ourselves . . . the other half wanted to cling to him and kiss him and tell him he would always be our dad". Under assault, she felt solidarity with her beloved mother; Ashworth "treasured the afterglow of a slap — it made me feel closer to my mother".

The book is firmly placed in its time — the 1970s, for Ashworth is 28 — with frequent references to Spangles, Curly Wurlys, Rod Hull and Emu, the Yorkshire Ripper, the Krypton Factor. But this loading up of detail can be irritating.

Elsewhere the writing is so loaded with metaphor that the real emotion — the terror, surely — is often lost. When she is beaten by her stepfather and says "the pain felt purple", one is left asking what the *emotional* pain felt like, not just the throbbing bruise.

As a result, the reader feels like a voyeur — the incidents so coolly described sound terrifying and yet we're kept at a distance, not brought in to feel the pain too. "Andrea was the steady one," she writes, of others' perception of her. "I had stiffened myself so much on the outside, my insides were clogged up." The problem with this book is that that external stiffness shields what must have been real pain within.

The descriptions of Ashworth's mother work best. There is an awful emptiness — her mother "standing in the window, a ghost, watching through the nets". And as Ashworth leaves home for university, in the most moving section of the book, her mother blurts out "You're my hope" — an extraordinary statement of desperate expectation. But what about Andrea? How did it feel to carry such a burden? And how, or why, did she manage to give such a spectacular two fingers to abuse? These questions linger, and point to an inner resilience and emotional understanding that is left largely unexplored. There must have been more to this woman's extraordinary survival than the discovery of the Brontës.

Briton scoops top US award

Stuart Millar

SHE is 82 and did not write her first serious novel until she was almost 60. But last week Penelope Fitzgerald was coming to terms with achieving what Kate Winslet and the other British Oscar hopefuls failed to do — beating the Americans in their own backyard.

To the astonishment of the guests assembled at a glittering ceremony in New York, Fitzgerald beat off the cream of heavyweight American literature to win the prestigious National Book Critics Circle fiction prize.

Up against her ninth novel, The Blue Flower, had been ranged American novels lauded as among the greatest of their era: Don DeLillo's Underworld (for which its publishers paid a rumoured $2 million), Philip Roth's American Pastoral, and Charles Frazier's Cold Mountain.

It was, as Art Winslow the NBCC's president put it, "a very, very, very difficult choice".

To add to the shock, this was the first year in which non-United States writers have been eligible for the prize, which is nominated by more than 600 literary editors and book reviewers across the US.

Another foreign writer, Peruvian-born Mario Vargas Llosa, received the criticism prize for Making Waves.

There is no cash prize, but the high-profile award guarantees massive publicity and increased sales for the winner.

Last week Ms Fitzgerald was resting at her granny flat in Highgate, north London, as she struggled to come to terms with her success. Informed of the victory by her US editor, Chris Carduff, who told her to celebrate, she replied: "You're right. I shan't do the ironing today."

She told the Guardian: "I am astounded. To tell you the truth, I didn't really know about the award. My publishers had entered it and I didn't really pay attention because I thought I had no chance of winning."

So certain was she that she had no chance of winning, Ms Fitzgerald refused persistent requests from her US publishers for ideas for an acceptance speech.

"Even to be on the shortlist was such an honour, so to win is such a surprise," she said. She admitted that she had not read the other books on the shortlist.

Despite winning the Booker Prize in 1979 for Offshore, and being shortlisted a further three times, Ms Fitzgerald has never attained the popular success that her supporters say she deserves. Her gentle historical fiction combines fine writing with accessibility.

The victory confirms Ms Fitzgerald's status as an almost-overnight sensation in the US. Less than a year ago, her books sold less than 3,000 copies in hardback.

The Blue Flower, which first appeared in paperback, is now into its 10th print run with 100,000 copies in circulation.

Her big break in the US was the decision by the Boston-based publisher Houghton to use The Blue Flower, which charts the origins of 18th century German Romanticism, as the flagship for a new paperback imprint, Mariner Books.

ILLUSTRATION. ANN HOBDAY

Burrowing into the past

Mark Cocker

IT IS SO far removed from our conventional notions of England as a green and pleasant land that it is hard to believe such a landscape ever existed. But Breckland, a region lying on the border between Norfolk and Suffolk, was unique.

An account left by the antiquarian William Stukeley is typical of many historical descriptions. "Going towards Brandon", he wrote in 1745, "we passed through an ocean of sand. Scarce a tree to be seen in miles, or a house, except here and there a warren house . . . When you come to an eminence you have a boundless prospect . . . We crossed the river Ouse and over a continuation of the same sort of country came to Elveden, a valley in the midst of this vast Arabian desert."

Despite the apparent incongruity of this comparison, Breckland had one other fundamental link with the Middle East. For the animal that played a major role in its economy, and which was largely responsible for maintaining those oceanic horizons, was probably first brought back to England from the Crusades.

It was the rabbit, and it eventually came to provide pleasures with a high social cachet for the English. Queen Elizabeth I, for instance, was particularly fond of hunting them and had them specially bred for the purpose. Another snippet from its distinguished cultural history was its inclusion at an inauguration banquet for a 15th century chancellor of England. The menu designed to honour George Neville included wild bull, porpoise and 4,000 bunnies.

Rabbit food and sport may have been an aristocratic preserve, but rabbit cultivation was the business of a different class of people. In Breckland it was under the control of warreners, whose isolated dwellings are mentioned in Stukeley's description. The warrens themselves covered as much as 6,000 hectares of Breckland and were surrounded with steep earth banks topped by gorse or palings. The warrener was responsible for keeping out unwanted vermin, and at one time his preventative measures extended even to man-traps and the gallows. When he needed to harvest his crop the warrener set temporary nets and collected rabbits with the aid of lurchers and ferrets. On a good day they might get as many as 200, and on a fair-sized warren the annual take could be 20,000 carcasses.

In its heyday Breckland was not just a rabbit paradise but a hauntingly beautiful landscape, since their endlessly grinding incisors maintained not just its open treeless character but also a distinctive avifauna which, until the 1830s, included the world's largest flying landbird — the great bustard.

Sadly, during the 20th century this strange sand-swept world collided with the realities of modern economics. Rabbit fur fell from fashion, while rabbit meat was eventually demoted from the top table to add flavour only to the countryman's stew, and in the 1950s it acquired a fatal taboo because of the lingering, flesh-crawling horrors of myxomatosis. By that date the Brecks had largely been ploughed up for crops or smothered with conifer plantations in Britain's drive for timber self-sufficiency.

Fortunately one or two relics have survived, such as Weeting Heath, now owned by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust. Superficially it looks like a barren shallow grassy bowl rising to a distant horizon broken only by rabbits. But Weeting and all that it supports are as precious and as redolent of England's social past as the Norman cathedral in nearby Norwich. On one deliciously mild spring morning it was a joy to go there, savour its extraordinary atmosphere and imagine how it must once have been.

Chess Leonard Barden

SPAIN'S élite tournament at Linares last month proved an embarrassment to Garry Kasparov's plans to keep the world title as a personal fief and to his habit of rubbishing his grandmaster colleagues.

Kasparov drew 11 of his 12 games, finished only joint third, and even incurred a $3,200 fine from the angry sponsor, Luis Rentero, for repeatedly breaking his tournament contract, which required no agreed draws before move 40.

Meanwhile Alexei Shirov, who was recently dismissed by Kasparov as a "talented amateur", was a point clear after 10 rounds, playing the best chess of his life.

Late defeats dropped Shirov to second behind India's Vishy Anand, who then turned down a final eliminator with Russia's Vlad Kramnik to decide Kasparov's title challenger. Shirov will now replace Anand and will play a 10-game match against Kramnik, starting in Spain on May 22.

After winning at Groningen, Wijk and Linares, Anand could well style himself world tournament champion.

Final Linares scores were Anand 7½/12, Shirov 7, Kasparov and Kramnik 6½, Svidler 5½, Ivanchuk 5, Topalov 4.

While Kasparov suffered, Anatoly Karpov was telling an interviewer that his own strongest motivation now was to surpass Emanuel Lasker's record 27-year tenure of the world title. Karpov became champion in 1975 when Fischer defaulted, so reckons he has four years to go.

You have to admire Karpov's cheek, bracketing Lasker's unbroken tenure with the trifling intermission to his own reign between 1985, when he lost to Kasparov, and 1993, when he was recrowned a paper champion after Kasparov and Short broke away from the official world body Fide.

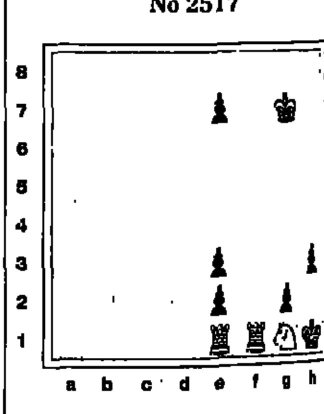
A Shirov v V Topalov

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 **Nxd4 a6 5 Bd3 Qb6 6** Nb3 Qc7 **7 Qe2 Nf6 8 Nc3 d6 9** f4 Be7 **10 e5!?** A pawn sacrifice to combat Black's provocative early Qb6.

dxe5 11 fxe5 Nfd7 12 Bf4 **Nc6 13 0-0 Ndxe5 14** Rae1 **Qb6+ 15 Kh1 Nxd3 16** Qxd3 **0-0 17 Qg3!** A conventional attacking move with an unusual double rook threat. **Kh8 18 Bc7** Qa7 19 **Na4 f6 20 Bb6 Qb8** An old pro trick; if you're ahead on the board, take chances to gain time on the clock. **21 Bc7 Qa7 22 Nb6** e5 **23 Nxa8 Qxa8 24 Rd1 Re8** Black's position looks terrible, material down with passive pieces, but Shirov relaxes. 25 Bb6 is now best, keeping control of d4.

25 Bd6? Bd8 26 Nc5 b6 27 **Ne4 Nd4 28 Bxe5** Exploiting the back rank. If fxe5 or Rxe5 29 Qxe5. **Nf5 29 Qg4 Ne3?** g6 loses to 30 Rxd8 Rxd8 31 Qg5! but 29 . . . fxe5! 30 Rxf5 g6 may save Black. 30 Qh5 **Rg8 31 Qf3 Nxd1 32 Nd6!** With a deadly duo of Qxa8 and Nf7 mate. **Qa7 33 Nxc8 Qd7 34 Nd6** Resigns. 35 Qd5 or Rxd1 will win.

No 2517



White mates in three moves, against any defence (by V Pachman, 1936).
No 2516: 1 Bb6 cxb6+ 2 Bf7 **Kxh7 3 Qh1 mate.**

Quick crossword no. 412

Across

1 At first sight (5,5)
7 Fundamental organ stop (8)
8 Inflammation of joints (4)
9 Pour (4)
10 Have a share of (7)
12 Fail to take an opportunity (4,3,4)
14 Naval officer, highest rank (7)
16 Church service — gather (4)
19 Together with — bonus (4)
20 Troops stationed in town (8)
21 Fuel container (6,4)

Down

1 Aim (5)
2 Stamp (7)
3 As well (4)
4 Toughened, using heat (8)
5 Gold brick (5)
6 Rail (6)
11 Alien — visitor (8)
12 Centre (6)
13 Fluty-sounding musical toy (7)
15 Outcome (5)
17 Mass of hair — an eye-opener (5)
18 Spoken (4)

Last week's solution

Bridge Zia Mahmood

BEING a confirmed bachelor does not prevent me from enjoying other people's weddings. In fact, marriage ceremonies in the East — though prohibitively expensive — involve much celebration and many days of partying. Evening festivities start late, so there's plenty of time for some bridge during the day. The following incidents will show you, though, that the only thing worse than a bad bridge player is a bad bridge player with a hangover!

South, the chief culprit, had on an earlier deal managed a notable coup by putting down a dummy with 15 cards. He had contrived to appropriate a couple from the other pack, to make up a 5-2-2-6 distribution which he had bid with no indication that he considered it out of the ordinary. But a few moments later, he picked up this hand:

♠9653 ♥87 ♦43 ♣J10985

West, the dealer on his left, opened with a strong bid of two clubs. North joined in with two diamonds, East passed, and South decided to create some confusion with a bid of two hearts! He was hoping that hearts would be West's long suit, and that by bidding them first he could disrupt the opponents' auction. But things did not go quite according to plan. West passed over two hearts with no apparent discomfort, and North raised briskly to four hearts! I watched with mounting excitement to see how South would extricate himself from this predicament. But he passed as if he had not a care in the world. West doubled for penalties, North and East both passed, and it was up to our hero.

Now, I have seen a number of psychic bids in my time — I've made a few myself, with varying degrees of success. I've seen opponents fooled by a psychic, and (far more often) a partner completely taken in. But never before have I seen a player believe his own psychic bid! Incredibly, though, that is what South did — he contributed a final pass to the auction, and so became declarer in the unlovely contract of four hearts doubled (see table above; right).

West, who could have taken his double to the Bank of England as security for more or less anything, wore a smile that could have inspired Leonardo. North looked on trustingly, for he had put down a fair hand for his partner. East must have wondered what on earth was happening, since his own hand was not inconsiderable in view of the bidding, while South thanked his partner without flinching when the dummy appeared.

North
♠ 10 4
♥ K 10 3
♦ A J 10 6 5 2
♣ Q 7

West
♠ A K 2
♥ A Q J 9 5
♦ K Q
♣ A 6 4

East
♠ Q J 8 7
♥ 6 4 2
♦ 9 8 7
♣ K 3 2

South
♠ 9 6 5 3
♥ 8 7
♦ 4 3
♣ J 10 9 8 5

The defence missed its way only slightly — East signalled extravagantly with the queen of spades on his partner's opening lead of the king, and South was eventually able to emerge with a spade trick to go with North's two red suit winners. That still came to a penalty of 1700, about which East and West couldn't have been too unhappy. As for South, like another famous wedding guest, he arose from the table a sadder, wiser, and much poorer man. ©

Cricket One-day international

Rampant Lara runs out of luck

Mike Selvey in Bridgetown

ENGLAND felt the wrath of a genius but survived at Kensington Oval last Sunday. Brian Lara, probably the finest left-hander since Sobers, scored his first century in any form of cricket on this ground and his highest limited-overs score against England.

The West Indies captain made a brilliant 110 and looked to be setting up a compelling finish as his side chased 294 to win the first of the five one-day internationals. But having hit 15 fours and three sixes, one almost demolishing the scoreboard, in his 106-ball innings, Lara was run out by Ben Hollioake's throw from deep midwicket as he attempted a second run. It left West Indies tottering at 218 for six, a position from which they did not recover, despite a worrying eighth-wicket partnership of 44 between Franklyn Rose and Rawl Lewis.

England eventually won by 16 runs when Mark Ealham bowled Courtney Walsh for a duck. England now have a string of eight successive one-day victories, and their eleventh in 15 starts against this opposition. They really are a good confident outfit now.

A century from Nick Knight, his third in one-day internationals, and a record-breaking opening stand helped England to their healthy if not supreme position. Knight made 122 from 130 balls before he, like Lara, was run out, having hit 13 fours and four sixes. With Alec Stewart (74 from 85 balls) he had given England their best start yet against West Indies, their partnership worth 165 in 31 overs.

Although West Indies brought back a measure of control mid-innings, some late hitting helped England to their highest total in the Caribbean by 63 runs.

They certainly needed it because Lara was murderous, held in check only when he lost the strike, and during some excellent off-spin bowling from Robert Croft, whose 10 overs cost 37 runs and brought the wicket of Shivnarine Chanderpaul.

Lara's pulling, on a pitch where there was scant margin for error, was of the highest class and brought him the majority of his 15 fours and three sixes.

It is to their credit then that England clawed their way back after Lara and Carl Hooper had added 88 in 14 overs for the third wicket. Hooper was caught at long-off for 45, however, and when Chanderpaul followed, taken at short fine-leg, the backbone of the batting had been broken and Lara virtually was obliged to go it alone. Ben Hollioake's arm proved decisive.

Lara had won the toss and had no hesitation in asking England to bat first. It was a decision he might have regretted. This was a pitch with pace and bounce, ideal for a limited-overs match. From the first over, when Knight drove Rose sweetly to the extra-cover boundary, the England openers were in control. Knight, in particular, was carrying his outstanding practice-match form into this match, and only Curtly Ambrose was able to put any kind of brake on the scoring rate, which held steadily in excess of five runs per over.

When the partnership with Stewart reached 157, it eclipsed the highest opening stand by either side in matches between them, the previous record of 156 compiled by Graham Gooch and Mike Atherton at Old Trafford in 1991.

Eight runs later, however, in the 31st over, Walsh made the breakthrough when Stewart ambitiously attempted to run the ball to third man, missed and was bowled.



Flying the flag . . . Rios celebrates victory PHOTO: MARC SEROTA

Rios on top of the world

CHILE'S Marcelo Rios, this year's beaten Australian Open finalist, defeated Andre Agassi 7-5, 6-3, 6-4 last Sunday to win the men's title at the Lipton Championships, the largest tournament outside the four Grand Slams, and take over from Pete Sampras as the No 1 player in the world, *writes Stephen Bierley in Key Biscayne, Florida*.

Previously, there had been only 13 No 1 men since the ATP introduced the rankings in 1973, among them Agassi. Rios is the first South American, and the fourth left-hander to hold the top spot.

His considerable talent is evident. Rios is not a power player although he has a forehand of rare penetration, a sumptuous double-handed cross-court pass and a serve of considerable variation and great accuracy. The only man to take a set off him during these championships was Britain's Tim Henman in the semi-finals.

His No 1 ranking will be questioned for the simple fact that he has not won a Grand Slam, but he surely will soon.

Golf

Leonard putts closest rivals in the shade

David Davies at Ponte Vedra

JUSTIN LEONARD produced yet another display of putting pyrotechnics last Sunday to win the first prize of $720,000 in the Players Championship here at Sawgrass. Just as he did at Royal Troon in the Open last July Leonard holed huge putts from all directions and, after going out in 34, started back with putts of 20 feet or over at the 10th, 11th and 13th. Then, at the 14th, he holed from off the green.

Those four birdies hurtled him past the opposition, including the overnight leader Lee Janzen, who faded completely. Next to challenge were Glen Day and Len Mattiace but neither could cling on, with the latter taking a five-over-par eight at the dreaded island hole, the 17th.

Leonard, with his somewhat stilted swing but fabulous short game, eventually went round in 67, for a total of 278, 10 under, to win by two from another former Open champion, Tom Lehman, with Day in third place.

The leading European, with a superb performance on his first visit to this tough course, was Lee Westwood, whose six-under-par finish was good enough to tie for fifth place, which will earn him around $160,000.

Westwood had a final round of 69, for a total of 282, holing a tricky downhill 5ft putt on the last green for his par. He was delighted with his effort, particularly as he had taken 74 in his first round, was still four over for the tournament after eight holes of the second round and had, as he said, "given the field a head start".

His one target last Sunday was "to keep it out of the water", which he achieved, his one mistake coming at the 14th, where he three-putted. He loves American conditions but will not, he says, play more than 13 or 14 tournaments in the US this year. The remainder of about 14 more events will be played closer to home, which is good news for the PGA European Tour.

Janzen's early and complete retreat was particularly galling for his caddie Andy Prodger, a man who used to work for Nick Faldo. In 1995, when Janzen won here, his bag-man was Dave Musgrove, formerly caddie to Roberto de Vicenzo, Severiano Ballesteros, Tom Watson and Sandy Lyle.

Musgrove was able to clear off his mortgage with the proceeds from that victory but he was unable to be present this week because his wife Hilary is ill and awaiting surgery. He arranged for Prodger to take over, and the replacement was obviously hoping for a repeat performance.

For Faldo, two under overnight and needing an inspirational and error-free round, it was a day of frustration. He was over-fidgety from the off, and at the long 2nd his drive crashed into a tree before coming down no more than 150 yards from the tee.

Faldo clearly has a problem with his swing. At the 10th, for instance, from the middle of the fairway he went for the pin and came down in a bunker 15 yards short. And so it continued. He finished with a 73 to remain 19th.

Sports Diary Mike Kiely

Atherton steps down after Test defeat

MIKE ATHERTON'S four-year tenure as captain of the English cricket team came to end in the wake of his side's defeat by an innings and 52 runs in the sixth Test against the West Indies in Antigua.

While the home side celebrated their 3-1 victory in the series, Atherton announced he was stepping down, citing his disappointment at the outcome of the series and his performances with the bat. However, he vowed to battle for his place in the side. Alec Stewart, Nasser Hussain and Mark Ramprakash have been mentioned as possible replacements.

In Banglore, Mark Taylor took the shine off India's Test series victory over Australia with an unbeaten 102 as the tourists secured the third and final match by eight wickets. Meanwhile South Africa completed a 2-0 series victory over Sri Lanka in Pretoria, winning the second Test by six wickets.

BETTER news for Newcastle in the wake of the scandal involving directors Freddie Shepherd and Douglas Hall. Former chairman Sir John Hall, back at the helm on a temporary basis to try to steady the ship, saw the club's rugby union side defeat Saracens 30-25 to secure the leadership of Premiership One.

However, Saracens' injured pride was restored somewhat by their subsequent 25-10 victory over Northampton at Franklin's Gardens to secure a place in the final of the Tetley Bitter Cup at Twickenham on May 9, where they will meet Wasps, 15-9 victors over Sale at Loftus Road.

May 2's Silk Cut Challenge Cup final will see Sheffield Eagles take on Wigan. The Yorkshire side defeated Salford 22-18 at Headingley while Wigan overcame London Broncos 38-8 at Huddersfield.

WORLD champions Brazil served notice of their intent to fight off all comers for their title at this summer's World Cup in France with a 2-1 victory over European champions Germany in the friendly in Stuttgart.

Cesar Sampaio opened the scoring for the South Americans, but after the break Ulf Kirsten equalised for the home side. An exciting finale saw world player of the year Ronaldo steer the ball past Andreas Köpke for the winning goal.

In Berne, England's preparations took a knock as a side depleted by injury went behind to a goal from Switzerland's Ramon Vega. However, Paul Merson secured a 1-1 draw for Glenn Hoddle's side with a second-half equaliser.

Other friendly internationals saw new Northern Ireland coach Lawrie McMenemy get off to a winning 1-0 start against Slovakia in Belfast, Scotland lose 1-0 to Denmark in Glasgow, and the Republic of Ireland go down 2-1 to the Czech Republic in Olomouc.

Arsenal have abandoned plans to move from Highbury to Wembley Stadium, much to the relief of the Football Association who want to make the venue the centrepiece of their campaign to secure the right to host the 2006 World Cup.

LAWRIE SMITH'S Silk Cut won the sixth leg of the Whitbread Round the World Race, completing the journey from São Sebastião in Brazil to Fort Lauderdale, Florida in 15 days, 19 hours, 55 minutes. Smith's nearest rival EF Language, skippered by Paul Cayard, was more than 20 miles behind.

WORLD Boxing Council heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis retained his title against Shannon Briggs in Atlantic City, knocking down his opponent three times in the process. The end came in the fifth when the exotically named referee Frank Cappuccino stepped in to prevent Briggs taking further punishment.

On the same bill, Britain's Herol Graham was stopped in the 10th round of his International Boxing Federation super-middleweight challenge against Charles Brewer. Graham twice knocked down his opponent but age finally caught up with the 38-year-old from Sheffield, who visibly tired before the end came.

CAMBRIDGE broke Oxford's 14-year-old record in the 144th Boat Race to secure a sixth successive victory over their rivals in 16min 19sec, 26 seconds inside the old mark.

Shiv Sharma is away